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THROUGH SOUTH WESTLAND.

Frontispiece

Photograph by C. A. Tomlinson
THE WAST RIVER-BED FROM THE SOUTH BANK.



THROUGH SOUTH WESTLAND

A JOURNEY TO THE HAAST AND MOUNT ASPIRING
NEW ZEALAND

BY
A. MAUD MORELAND

WITH FORTY-EIGHT PLATES FROM PHOTOGRAPHS
AND TWO MAPS

SECOND EDITION

LONDON AND MELBOURNE
CHRISTCHURCH, WELLINGTON AND DUNEDIN
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DEDICATED TO
THE FRIENDS AMONG WHOM I LIVED,
AND TO THOSE OTHERS EAST AND WEST, WHO
ONE AND ALL MADE ME WELCOME,
AND TAUGHT ME TO LOVE
THEIR LAND.

PREFACE.

THIS is the story of a ride—of a five weeks' wandering in the Back-blocks of a land still in the making—a land whose conditions, even to-day, are often primitive. Properly speaking, there is no story—only impressions, gathered in those wanderings: things I saw, things I heard, in isolated settlements, where the men and women, living face to face with Nature, seem to show a readier kindness; where the robuster virtues still thrive, and the heart of the race is young.

Looking back now from under English skies, surrounded by sights and sounds of an English summer, it seems very far away: a land apart—a people who belong almost to another world.

An enchanted land of cool, dim, forest aisles: of lonely snow-peaks filling the end of some purple gorge: of rushing, hurrying streams: of untouched solitudes, where one goes all day long in wondering worship.

In the House of the Forest a voice calls to one unceasingly, and bids one understand. Those to whose spirit it has spoken can never more be

sundered from it, though the hills may lie between, for they bear the memory of it “about in their hearts continually, as it were a new strength.”

No greater contrast can be imagined as one passes from the yellow eastern plains, with their purple setting of distance—where the glare of sun lies on far-reaching landscapes drawn in very simple lines, where the bare mountains show but a blue-black patch of native beech-wood—to this cool shadowy forest world, with its thousand varied forms in leaf and tree.

As I write of sunsets on shining waters, and pure snow peaks rising against a New Zealand sky :

“ Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals.”

I hear again the tumbling river and the tuis calling : I smell again the mingled perfumes of the bush. I see the glacier pushing its frozen finger down even among the tree-ferns and the ratas ; their splendid scarlet shines against the ice itself, and the high peaks glitter against the wondrous blue. The fresh, cold air is on my face of mornings when,

“ I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine. . . .

Far-off the torrent call’d me from the cleft :
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow.”

Those memories seem at times very like paradise. This coast I write of is a West Coast, and to a

large extent it has been peopled from that other west coast across the seas. Was it the name “West Coast” that acted like a charm to draw these wanderers from Galway and from Clare?

They brought with them that touch of romance and melancholy that lie behind all their strenuousness, and gay light-heartedness. Here they found a climate soft and moist, but no other likeness, save in the name, to their own west coast.

They came to a forest land of deep shade, and tangled growth, and struggling life:

“ Creeper with creeper, bush with bush at strife—
Warring and wrestling for a breathing space.”

A land of silence and mystery, save for the voice of many waters.

As we passed among them, they gave us of their best with cheery welcome. All unconsciously they taught us of their forest craft: to them I owe a debt I can never pay, but I hope they knew and felt that we were not unmindful.

There is a certain sacredness which lays its seal on many a story I was told, and on many a detail of the life on the West Coast. It prevents me writing more of the dwellers there, but to one and all I would offer the thanks I can never say.

And since it is due to those who may read these pages to know the *raison d'être* of things, I would further add that Tom and the Scorpion were the two horses: that our journeys were made in primitive fashion, carrying a few needfuls on our

saddles. In rain and shine we travelled ; stopping where we could for as long as we felt inclined, or when the horses needed rest ; covering sometimes twenty miles, sometimes fifty, in a day. When the homeward journey by Lake Hawea and the Lindis Pass, over the McKenzie Plains and through South Canterbury, came to be added to the trip here described, we found we had covered between seven and eight hundred miles.

In the second half of the narrative, the eastern plains and on to Mount Aspiring is described—that strange, little-known region we first learnt about on the West.

And lastly, to anyone who may be fired like ourselves to seek the forest world, and plunge into its untracked fastnesses, I would say : leave most of your kit behind, but take with you, as indispensable, a botany book. No after-reading quite makes up for the longing—so often unsatisfied—to know the names of plants and trees in that unfamiliar world. Let the book be Laing and Blackwell's "Plants of New Zealand," with its beautiful photographs and descriptions.

Leave your gun behind : the birds are so trusting and so friendly ; and when there is no need to shoot for the pot, it seems a shame to disturb them.

For game on the West Coast, one only has wild duck and black swan—unless one counts grebe and pigeon as game. Many of the interesting native birds are dying out—as their forest goes,

they must go too. They cannot live elsewhere, and of many settlements, especially in the North Island, the lament is only too true :

“ Gone are the forest birds, arboreal things,
Eaters of honey, honey-sweet of song,
The tui and the bell-bird—he who sings,
That brief, rich music we would fain prolong.
Gone the wood-pigeon’s sudden whirr of wings :
The daring robin, all unused to wrong.
Wild, harmless, hamadryad creatures, they
Lived with their trees, and died, and passed away.”

It is a new and baffling world to the traveller where the old order is often reversed, and where he is bewildered by the strangely foreign look of leaf, and tree, and plant. He hears familiar names, or strange Maori ones that remain but a moment in his head : but strange or familiar, they seem to convey nothing to his mind. Vainly the eye wanders round seeking something familiar—something other than a fern, of which it might be said, “I know to what that belongs.”

I went into the forest ignorant of almost every species. How I longed for someone to tell me its secrets, to make those baffling problems of the bush plain to me ! I was bewildered ; all one’s European ideas seemed only to make matters worse. I heard of pines, but not one among the many species seemed even faintly to resemble those I knew. Take for instance the lily family in New Zealand : not a single species calls to mind a lily. *Cordyline australis*, the cabbage tree of the settlers, grows to a great size, with

bushy heads of yucca-like leaves, and sprays several feet long of minute, creamy flowers, whose perfume is heavy and sweet, and full of honey. In the bush grows its near relative with broader, greener leaves (sometimes reddish) springing direct from the root-stock. And these are lilies. The cordyline is a numerous family spreading all over Australia and the South Sea Islands. *Cordyline terminalis* provides in its roots an important part of the food of the Polynesians. Another member of the family is *Phormium tenax*, the flax of the settlers, with sword-leaves as much as ten feet long. It has a lofty spike of red-brown flowers, full of honey—decorative rather than beautiful. This *lily* has a fibre so strong, I have known a horse throw himself in his attempts to break away, when tied to a knot of flax blades.

Then there are the various astelias: some epiphytic, some growing in the damp leaf-mould of the bush—all conspicuous rather for their brilliant berries than for their flowers.

One sometimes finds an upland covered with the orange gold of the Maori onion—*Bulbinella Rossii*. The spikes of flowers might at first sight be taken for field orchids, but again it is a lily.

Of orchids there are many in the bush—not very conspicuous, as a rule, except *Dendrobium Cunninghamii*, which is rose-coloured—but as on this journey I did not find either orchids or clematis, I have not mentioned them. The

Clematis indivisa is very conspicuous in late summer on the West—one of the most beautiful of all New Zealand flowers.

When we consider that of 1,400 flowering plants of New Zealand, three-quarters are found nowhere else, and that the remainder belong to families scattered over Australia, Malaya, Melanesia, and South America, it will be seen how wide is the field. Constantly one is asking the question : “ What does it belong to ? ” And as often as not no one knows. Yet the charm of being brought face to face with the unknown forest world is very great.

Except in a few instances, I have taken my chapter headings from poems of that band of singers that has been growing up across the seas—singers whose music is often as sweet and haunting as that of the birds in their forests.

My grateful thanks are due to Mr. Tomlinson of Christchurch, New Zealand, for his kindness in allowing me the use of his beautiful photographs of the Haast Track, and to the New Zealand Government Tourist Department for their courtesy in allowing one of the Franz Josef to be reproduced ; to the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, N.Z., and the Curator, Mr. Edgar Waite, for that of the Kiwi, and to Rev. H. E. Newton, for another of the Franz Josef glacier. And here I would like to offer grateful thanks to the Hon. W. Pember Reeves, Mr. W. Warde Fowler, Sir Samuel Dill, the Rev. H. E. Newton, and Miss

Graves—who have so kindly read and criticised my MS. My descriptions deal entirely with the South Island ; to those who have only visited the warmer North Island, possibly they may appear untrue to what they remember ; they are, however, taken from journals carefully kept throughout our wanderings—a faithful record of my impressions.

No attempt is made to describe the rapidly growing towns and busy life on the East ; beyond the mighty barrier of the Southern Alps lies the land of which I write—South Westland.

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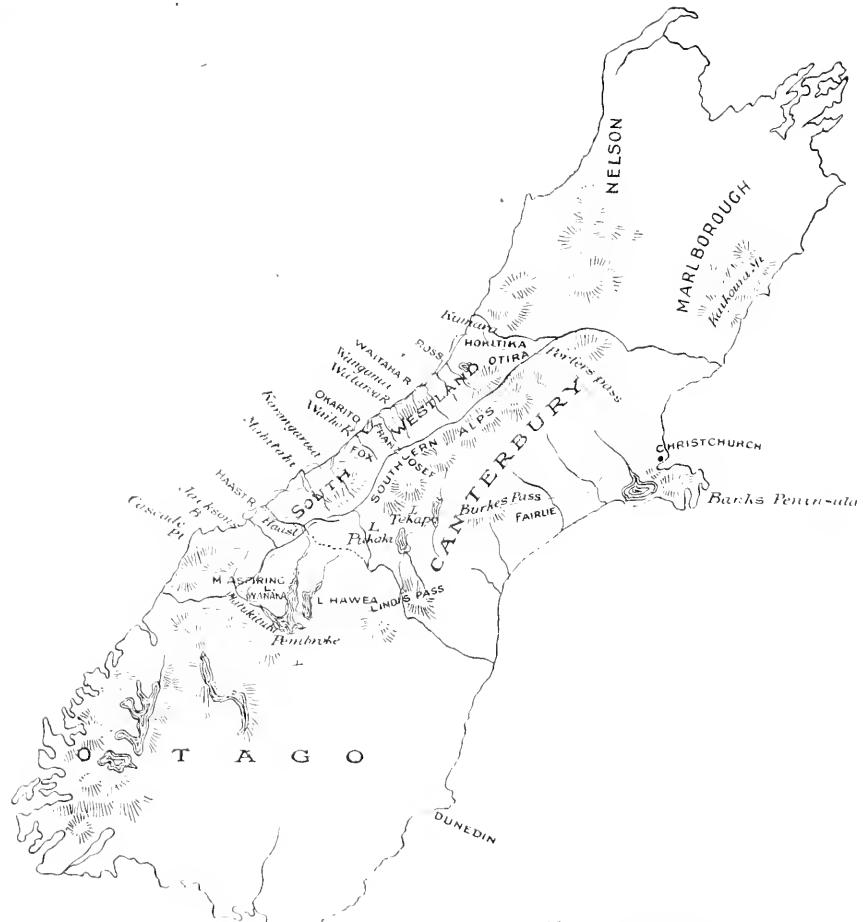
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PART I.

A RIDE THROUGH SOUTH WESTLAND.



NEW ZEALAND
SOUTH ISLAND
ROUTE

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH THE OTIRA.

The silence and the sunshine creep
With soft caress
O'er billowy plain and mountain steep
And wilderness—
A velvet touch, a subtle breath,
As sweet as love, as calm as death,
On earth, on air, so soft, so fine,
Till all the soul a spell divine
O'er shadoweth.

GEORGE ESSEX EVANS.

OUT of the town and along the dusty white road lined with trim houses, and gardens aglow with colour : on to country roads less dusty and with fewer and fewer houses, we rode forth one morning. It was six o'clock. The road-side herbage was drenched with dew. A grey-blue haze lay all over the wide Canterbury plains which seemed to stretch away to the farthest horizon, tall gum trees and fir plantations round the homesteads breaking the monotony of their flatness. Everywhere the crops were ripening to harvest ; another week's sunshine and the wheatfields that waved all golden now would be cut. Fruit ripened in the orchards, and summer was at its height.

It was a blue day. All objects, near and far, were tinged with blue under the New Zealand sky, and as the sun got hotter, everything shimmered and trembled in the heat.

We breakfasted at a wayside inn, and rode on

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again, and when it grew unbearably hot we sought shelter at a little sun-baked place called Kirwee : just a few houses beside the inn, and a cabin of a railway station alongside the road—for railways and roads share the same wide tracks in the plains. Here we dawdled away the mid-day hours till tea-time, and then as a little breeze sprang up we started to finish the forty-two miles to Mt. Torlesse.

The mountains had come into sight now. At first blue and featureless, then blacker and browner, the deeper valleys like splashes of purple. The first sight of their snowy tops made one forget the plains and the dusty road ; our spirits rose, and we cantered fast along the wide, grassy margin. But we had lingered too long, and as we rode over an endlessly straight stretch, marked by clumps of black fir trees at regular intervals, the sudden-falling dusk came about us. The plain spread like a tawny sea to the foot-hills pushing out their purple headlands in cape and promontory :

“ Darkly, like an armèd host
Seen afar against the blue
Rise the hills, and yellow-grey
Sleeps the plain in cove and bay,
Like a shining sea that dreams
Round a silent coast.”

Beyond lay a dead-white wall—a ghostly barrier of snow—between two purple ranges. All nearer objects became black and indistinct. Suddenly, behind the dead-white wall an orange light grew up, palpitating up and up past the zenith, till the night clouds overhead blazed out

in gold and orange as it caught their edges. We watched it spread from bank to bank. Then came another change. The gold turned rosy red, then crimson, deeper and deeper, till all the clouds were blood-red, and we rode on in a darkening world, our eyes fixed on the glory above. It passed as suddenly as it came, and nought was left but a clear green streak of sky above the snow to show whence the glory had come ; and then suddenly we realized it was dark, that we were tired, and the night grown chilly, and if we meant to arrive in any decent time that night, we must bestir ourselves. There were still seven miles to do, but we were sure of our welcome, no matter at what untimely hour we arrived. At last in the dusk we rode up to the hospitable door, and the Master of Mt. Torlesse met us with a hearty greeting and hustled off the horses, making mental notes as to how unmilitary our pack-straps and accoutrements were, compared with his beautiful equipment ! In fact, when we made our start two days later, we found many little alterations had been instituted. I was supplied with a treasure in the shape of a nose-bag, into which went all the belongings I might want *en route*, without troubling to open a pack. After a day's rest we were rattled up betimes, and by four a.m. the Master of Torlesse was supplying our wants with hot coffee, and lecturing us on straps and the proper rolling up of our kit ; and then rode with us the first three or four miles, to put us on our

way. The Torlesse range lay grey and lifeless beyond the green paddocks and the crops round the homestead, and as we got among the stony hills the mist rolled down, alternating with bursts of sunshine. Everywhere stony rivers ran at the bottom of dreary valleys, with drearier hills rising up to stonier mountains, none over 6,000 feet, and all desolate. And when the afternoon came on, the rain came too, and we rode with heads down against a tearing south-west storm, that deluged us with sheets of water. Those were forty-four long miles. I only remember a wet stony road, the brim of my hat pouring a veil of water across my eyes and Transome's figure in front in a long black oilskin and sou'-wester, bearing an absurd likeness to a fireman who had been played upon by the hose.

But all things come to an end, and we saw the welcome end-gable of the Bealey Hotel on a rise above us. The greeting we got was characteristic :

“ Och ! what-iver brought yees out such weather ? It's been raining here for a fortnight, and more ! Shure this was a mad journey for yees to be making ! Dear, dear ! ”

But once inside, our kind host and hostess gave us a warm welcome for they knew us well, and I was set down beside a roaring fire, my wet coat removed, and being offered “ something hot ” to drink, before I well knew where I was.

It made no matter that the hotel was already



PORTER'S PASS;
DREARIE HILLS RISING UP TO STONIER MOUNTAINS

taxed to its utmost: that men would have to sleep in dining-rooms—even in bath-rooms and passages—while women and babies filled the upper rooms. Somehow, there was a spare room for me—somehow, we had a good supper, and not one of the crowd but was made welcome. The congestion was all due to the Westland Railway terminus booking everybody who wanted a Christmas ticket to Christchurch—without any regard to the number it was possible to convey. At that time the railway on the west only reached as far as Otira, some sixteen miles from this, while the eastern section stopped at Broken River, at least as far away again in the opposite direction. Between the two lay the long coach drive, across rivers unfordable for foot passengers; up and down over the ranges, which would one day all be tunnelled and the lines connected. But that happy day was still in the future, and here was a crowd of thirty odd, dumped on the top of the Bealey, while their friends waited for them in Christchurch. Four coach loads had already gone; some of the men had walked, and the rest must wait till the coaches returned. Yet not one of them was grumbling—they only praised the kindness of the hotel in providing for their wants, and sat about, chatting and laughing, nursing their babies.

We made up our minds to go on next day, and, fortunately for us, the weather proved fine.

We crossed the Waimakariri in safety, getting a beautiful view of snow mountains and glaciers

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at the head of the wide valley—a couple of miles, perhaps, across. This is always a dangerous crossing, and when the mail-coach cannot get through, the mailman brings the bags across on one of the horses. Passengers under the circumstances, must have patience. It is told of a celebrated admiral whose coach was caught in the flood, and who was rescued with difficulty, that he remarked : “ He had been at sea all his life and never been wrecked, till the Waimakariri River did it.”

Once across, we rode up the Bealey. The gorge wound among steep mountains clothed in great part with the southern beech ; waterfalls were frequent, and fine views of snow-capped ranges. Then we got to the divide called Arthur’s Pass where are three small tarns lying on a mass of old moraine, which seems to fill the space between two parallel ranges. From one side of this the waters flow east, and from the other west. All this alpine meadow was beautiful with flowers : giant celmisias with satiny-white petals like enormous daisies, mingled with snow-white gentians, and the wonder of the Alps—the mountain lily.* It is a pure white kingcup with golden centre, the leaves as large as saucers, and often the flowers are two or three inches across. As usual in the New Zealand mountains, most flowers were white. The plants here are specially interesting, because of the meeting of outliers from east

* *Ranunculus Lyallii.*



NEAR THE BEALEY.

and west. To a very large extent the western species do not grow on the east, except in certain places such as the Kaikouras, where the forest is very like a western forest. Farther south still, tree-ferns and pines occur ; but, speaking broadly, the ranges on the east have beech forest, while the west has pine forest and a sub-tropical flora of its own.

The road ziz-zagged in loops down a steep descent above a torrent. Bare, forbidding rocks and screens of loose stones ran up on one side, and presently we arrived at a place where they had all run down in a terrific rock-slide. The road was gone. A forlorn coach and one or two buggies had been abandoned there, but already a narrow track was scratched across the face of the *débris*. We led the horses over the sliding mass, and gained the undamaged road beyond. The road-menders told us of the violence of yesterday's storm which had wrecked the road, snapping off great forest trees, and strewing the track with wreckage. When we arrived at the Otira we found matters were in an even more congested state than at the Bealey. And still the people arrived ! Not a bed or a towel was to be had, and at least sixty had slept there that night !

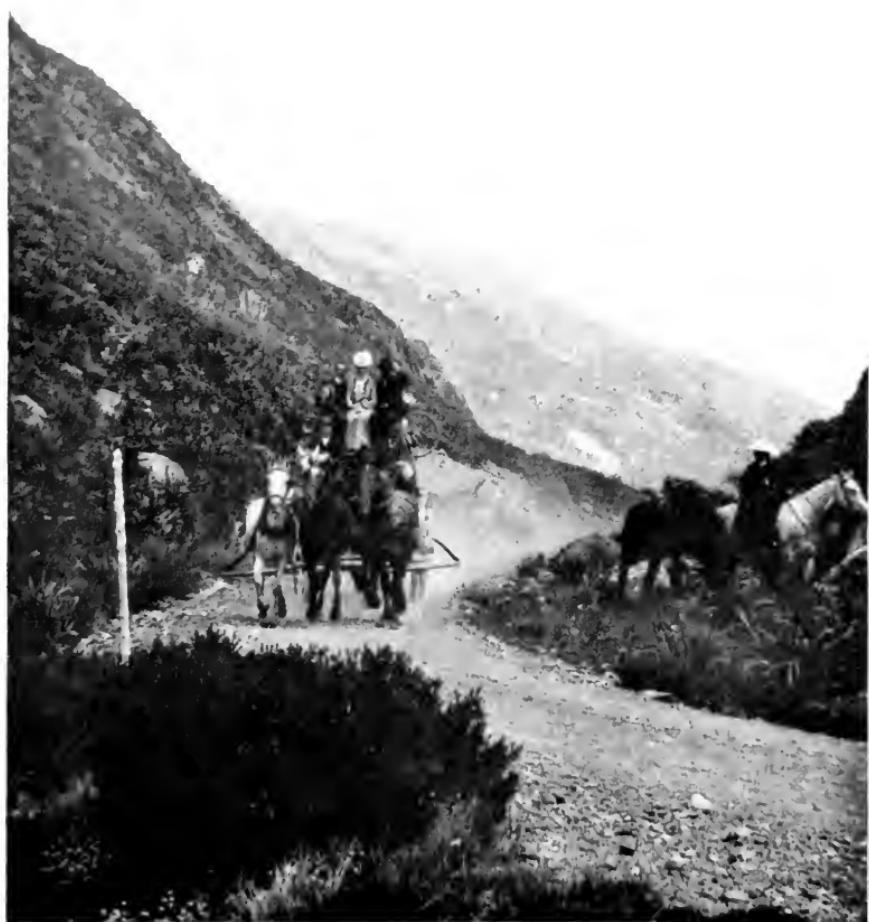
A young man was hastily evicted to make room for me (although they failed to clear out his personal effects), and Transome, after being promised a room, had to share it with two others.

At midnight the rightful owner arrived at my

door and a parley ensued. He began by rattling the door violently. I assured him it was a positive impossibility I should get up to open it, and he went away quite peaceably, if somewhat aggrieved. Next day every one was sent forward in coaches and carts, some on bicycles and horses, all alike cheerful, though two days late for their Christmas festivities.

That was a glorious morning when we set out. The more sombre eastern colouring had given place to vivid greens; pine forest and ferns took the place of beech; above the gorge the snow peaks gleamed pure and sharp against the intense blue of the sky: it was enough to make the heart rejoice. And very joyous we were, as we rode down that sun-flecked woodland way, where the pinky track before us lay all mottled and barred with violet shadows. Bend after bend caught the morning sun as it poured a flood of golden light on tree-fern and unfamiliar foliage. Sometimes between the trees one caught sight of a snowy summit with mauve shadows on the snow, at the end of a purplish-blue vista. It was a fairyland of light and shade on dancing leaves, and on one side the river kept us company all the way: now swift and silent, eddying in blue-green streams, now tumbling over rocks in snowy foam.

Later I saw grander and more beautiful places, but the Otira taught me to love the road, wandering on and on beneath the trees, with its play of



ASCENT TO ARTHUR'S PASS.

light and shade, its mystery and silence. The forest spoke then in an unknown tongue, but it was then I first heard its voice.

We could not hurry : it was too beautiful, and when we came to an old-time coaching-inn with grassy paddocks by the blue river we stopped. Transome saw to the horses while I went to negotiate rooms. The place seemed utterly deserted though the doors stood wide. After a time the landlord appeared. He was of a rueful countenance. His wife, he said, "Was gone visitin'." She had made up the beds before departing, but there was nothing in the house to eat.

"There's not many comes this way now the railway's running," said mine host.

I cheerfully suggested eggs and tea would do us quite well. A still deeper gloom descended on him.

"There ain't any hens," said he.

"Cheese," I remarked with sinking heart. "Cheese and bread, and tea."

"Haven't any cheese in the house, and only the bit bread she left me before she went."

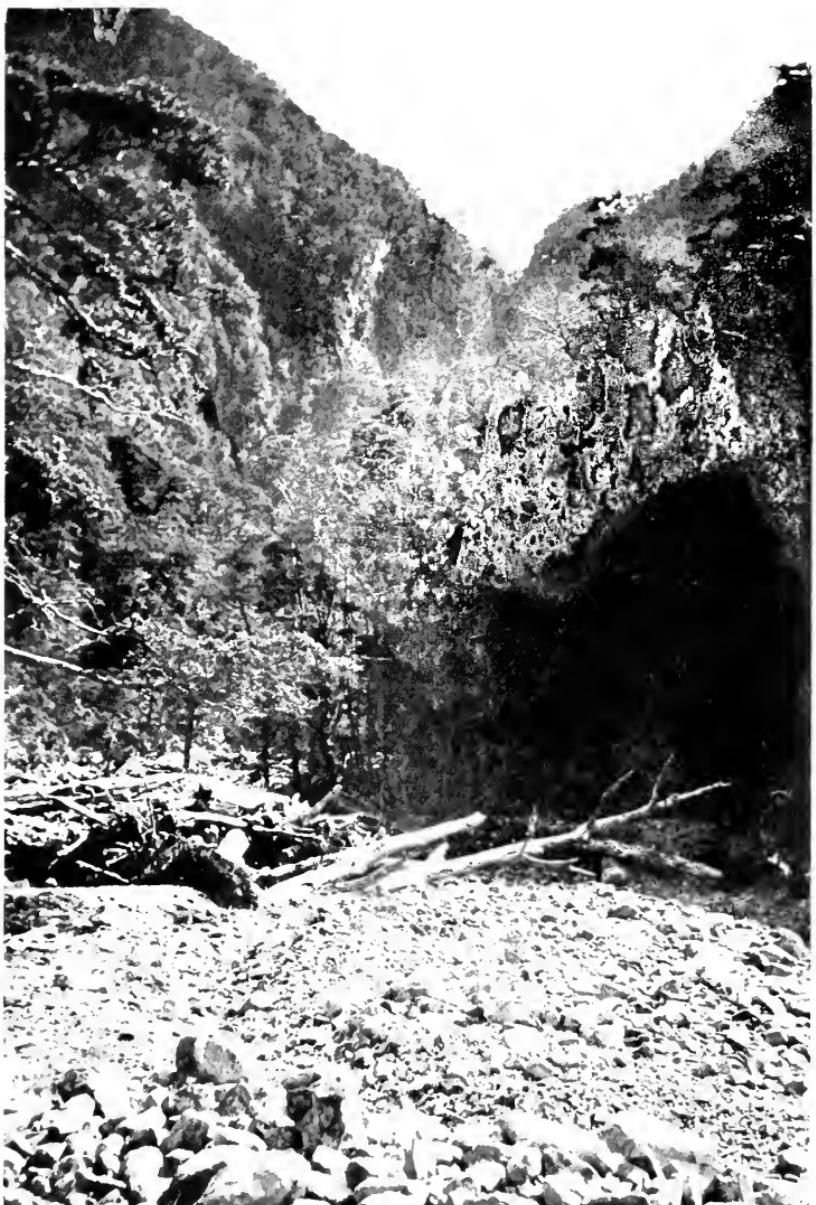
We seemed to have struck bed-rock. A rattle of wheels sounded from the road, and at this critical moment a spring-cart drove up. Was it indeed another guest ? With great deliberation the lady in it descended, and advanced, smiling, to meet us. She carried a basket, and there seemed to be things in the cart besides. Then she remarked : "When I saw you pass our place a little way back, I says to my husband, 'Mark my

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words, they're for Jackson's and the missus is away'; and I've just brought along a chicken and things: I'll do for you to-night."

Here was a good Samaritan in very deed. Thus everything being comfortably settled, we strolled off to the river that had been calling to us all the morning. There was an ideal bathing-place in a deep backwater, where the rock ledges lay hot in the sunshine. When we returned, a most appetizing meal was ready spread for us on a clean table-cloth; and our kind friend did not seem even to think she had done anything out of the way. Leaving all ready for breakfast, she bundled into her cart, and drove away with a cheery "good-night," pursued by our grateful thanks.

Next day was, if possible, even more beautiful. At times the country was less wooded, and views of blue ranges opened across the river; while on our left the spurs of the mountains were clothed with the crimson-flowered rata. The tree-tops were a scarlet glory—not an isolated tree here and there, but splashed over red as by a giant's brush. There are seven or more varieties of this myrtle to be found in New Zealand; and although at first sight I was puzzled by the ratas, yet once the idea is put in one's head that it actually belongs to the myrtle family, the resemblance is striking enough. This was the common *Metrosideros lucida*, a tree of exceedingly hard wood, growing to sixty feet or more. The petals are insignificant, but the



EFFECTS OF A STORM IN THE BEALEY

scarlet, brush-like stamens are nearly an inch long, growing in thick masses and covering the tops of the trees. Another variety is the rata vine,* which climbs to the tops of the tallest forest trees ; and their relative of the North Island, *Metrosideros robusta*, is perhaps one of the strangest. Apparently when the seed germinates high in the fork of some forest tree, it sends down roots to seek the ground. The roots join together and enclose the tree, gradually crushing the life out of it ; but in the end it seems to become a tree itself. Specimens are known whose trunks even reach ten feet in diameter and the height of 100 feet. Later on we grew familiar with *M. scandens*, a climber with white flowers ; and there are also a yellow and a pink rata. The leaves are dark green and pointed at both ends, and bear a certain similarity to each other in the different varieties.

We left the ratas behind, and rode down a straight vista of track between the brown pillars of the tree-ferns, with their beautiful fronds above our heads, to the little, old, forgotten inn at Taipo. Taipo means "The Devil." At the door sat the owner, dozing in his chair, as he does the live-long summer day, for he is nearly blind. Everybody was old. The ancient servitor who took our horses was a toothless old Swiss, who babbled of the difficulties he had been put to to get his old-age pension. He had no birth certificate, and the authorities at last gave it to him on the strength

* *Metrosideros florida* and *Metrosideros hypericifolia*.

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of an old passport. He was gnarled like an oak, and bent with rheumatism. I sat down by our host, for he loved to talk of the golden days of fifty years ago, when he first came from the "Ould Country" to try his fortune in Australia. He sent his wife to fetch a chain he had made in those days to show me. It was made of nuggets, none bigger than a pea, which he had linked together with gold rings. "Surely that is very valuable," I said. "May be a matter o' fifteen pounds," he replied, "but I would not part with it for that and more."

Beside the house the brawling Taipo river sweeps down from the hills, where they said there was still much gold, could it but be found. Taipo was the embodiment of peace—a place to slumber in, for since the railway was made, fewer and fewer seem to care to spend their time as we were doing: the towns are the attraction for the country dwellers. We left it to its sleep, feeling host, servitor, and inn would soon all be at rest.

As evening drew on we entered a country which has been utterly changed by gold mining. Hills have been torn down, valleys have been made; the whole countryside was a series of scars and furrows on a gigantic scale.

Desolation spread around in blackened tree-stumps and heaps of stones, the mangled remains of what had been once the virgin bush. But it was all still and silent. Rude wooden tramways



OTIRA
THE SUN-FLECKED WOODLAND WAY

still ran among the hills, and broken sheds there were, and sometimes a rusty engine ; but the diggers had moved across the river, and we met no one.

The valley below us lay in a mist like thin blue smoke, through which the tree-tops pierced like domes and spires ; high above the evening shadows two snowy domes were touched with rose and saffron. But the light soon faded, and our road wound down between the blackened tree-stumps to a forlorn little mining town of wretched wooden houses. It was called Dillmanstown, and seemed to be all saloons and "pubs," and these mostly shut up. Vainly we looked among them for anything that seemed to promise a night's shelter. When we asked for such, the men and women at the corner of the street stared at us incredulously. Then they consulted together, and one sent for his wife, who appeared at the door with a baby in her arms. Giving us one look, she remarked shortly : "It's Kumara they want. This isn't Kumara ! Go on a mile, and you'll come to it." So we went on what seemed a long mile in the dark, and came to Kumara, with quite a large hotel and ample accommodation for man and beast. Next morning saw us off early, for we had forty-one miles to cover. It was a still, grey English day, making the bush look colourless and cold, and the desolate diggings more desolate than ever. We passed little settlements with most of the houses shut up, or this part of the country has been worked out.

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Often peat-bog, ringed by gaunt dead forest, added to the dreariness, and beyond were desolate sand-hills and a cold-grey line of sea. No life, no colour. A broken bridge, with ragged timbers unrepaired, and beyond that three miles of bare, flat road. Then a few houses appeared, and presently we were riding down the wide street of Hokitika, the chief town on this bit of the coast. There was a general air of hilarity abroad, and the town was full of holiday-makers. However, we got rooms in one of the hotels which, at any rate, commanded a magnificent view across a wide stretch of tide-way, bounded by low, swampy shores shut in by forest. But far away—a hundred miles or more to the southward—like a mighty rampart standing out to sea, the Southern Alps rose up. The green Pacific rollers seemed to wash the base of those blue peaks and crests, which culminated in the great mass of Mount Cook, towering over all. Evening by evening we watched that unrivalled view, saw the long purple wall with snowy summits change to rose against a clear green sky that shaded upwards into azure—then darken gently as the stars came out and the moon rose, turning the snows to silver. Hokitika might boast a fine harbour, were it not for the dangerous bar and shoal-water at the mouth of its river. A long mole has been run out to sea, and moderate-sized steamers can lie alongside the wharf, close to the town. Here we found a busy little launch awaiting passengers for the Mahinapur Creek. I know that this and the

lake are among the beauty spots of the West, but a wet day left us only the impression of weird swamps, where white pines grew out of brown water, their branches draped with streamers of ghostly white lichen. One gazed down eerie vistas of brown water, between dead or dying trees, as the launch passed between tall grasses and giant flax. When we crossed the lake, the wind blew wet and cold off the mountains, making wavelets that splashed into the boat ; and we were thankful to land, and take refuge in a house by the railway-construction works. There was no possibility of walking in a wet, half-cleared swamp ; and in company with twenty or thirty draggled sight-seers we ate our lunch, and repaired to an empty railway carriage until such time as it saw fit to start on its journey back to Hokitika. This little line is the beginning of one which is to open up the Coast. Its first section will be twenty miles through swamps and forest to Ross, the only town as yet beyond this. At present it has got about half-way, and was being used chiefly by people wanting to make an excursion. The next few days for me were blank, as I developed a swelled face, which kept me in my room. Glorious weather succeeded that one wet day, and Transome made all the excursions alone. I was lying one evening by the open window, watching the purple shadows on the distant mountains. It had been a very hot day, and I had not seen Transome at all, he having started early for Lake Kaneiri. My door opened,

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and he came in very dusty and tired, and, casting himself down on a chair, exclaimed :

“ I’ve done it this time. I’ve lost the Scorpion ! ”

“ Lost her ; impossible ! She must be somewhere,” I answered ; and visions of that wilful beast setting off on her own way home crossed my mind. I hadn’t the least doubt she would reach it, too, if no one interfered with her—she might be half-way back to Christchurch by this time !

“ Well,” he went on, “ I got to Kaneiri and an old fellow bothered me into going for a sail on the lake. It was a heavy old tub, and his sail was a fixture—would neither go up nor down ; so he couldn’t sail against the wind, and I had to row all the way back. It was frightfully hot, and when I got back there wasn’t a sign of the Scorpion. We hunted for her everywhere, and I’ve walked back eleven miles with the saddle on my head.” He announced his intention of riding Tom over early next morning. When he got there, the old man met him with the news she had forced her way through the bush to a place some distance off, and was feeding with several other horses. They had to make a wide circuit to drive her back, but seeing Tom she gave up the game, and allowed herself to be caught without further trouble.

On another occasion she made off while Transome was bathing with her nose-bag on her head. He ran after her, but she struck into some bush, and as he had to return for his clothes, she got a long start. At last he caught sight of her standing



ON THE MAIN SOUTH ROAD:
"AT TIMES IT WAS THERE; AT TIMES IT WAS NOT."

stock-still, and twisting her head round to look at him. She had run her neck into a loop of supple-jack, and owing to the nose-bag she could not withdraw her head. Her ladyship was fairly caught, and hot and cross as he felt, he could not help laughing at the reproachful look in her eyes.

At last we were able to make a start, and entered on the first stage of the Main South Road, which is like few other roads in the world. For seventy miles beyond Ross it *is* really a road (barring the lack of such things as bridges), and is travelled all the year round by a mail-coach and settlers' carts —rivers permitting.* It is beyond that its eccentricities begin, and ever as we went it became a source of deeper and deeper interest and speculation. At times it was there ; at times it was not. The swamps, or the sea, or the rivers had taken it ; then it would reappear, having left us for miles at a time, to extricate ourselves as best we might. Ross was to be our next stopping place, and I was very anxious to hear more about the gold-getting, which always fascinated me.

* NOTE.—The road, as far as the Franz Josef, is now a good driving track, with the main rivers bridged.

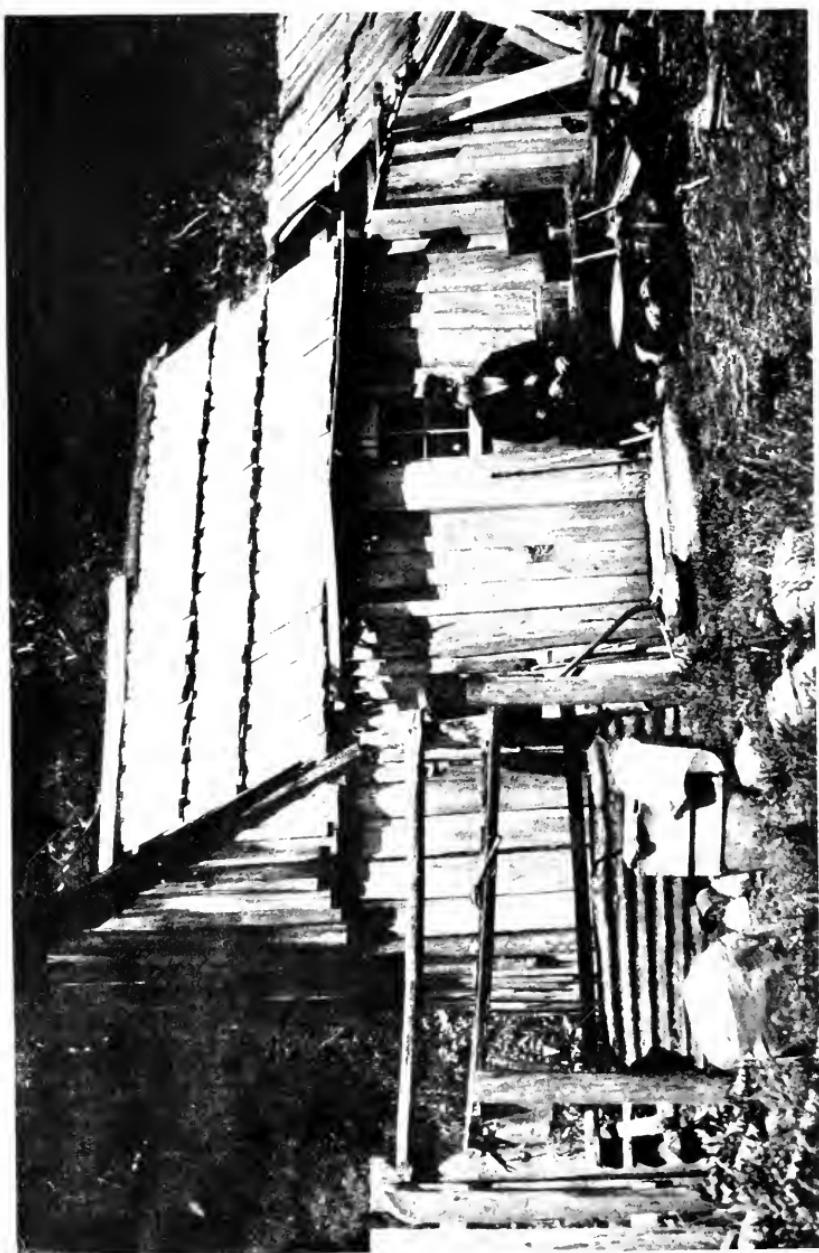
CHAPTER II.

BY THE WATERS OF WESTLAND.

A land of streams ! Some like a downward-smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go ;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land : far off three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd : and dew'd with showery drops,
Up-climb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

TENNYSON.

THOSE who go to Ross do not usually visit it for pleasure—though I once knew a lady who spent a week there, but I think it was because she could not go any farther. It is strictly a place that minds its own business, which is gold-getting ; and those who go there, go either directly or indirectly because of the gold. It is rather a fascinating place, reminding one a little of a French town, with its houses perched about on reddish-coloured hills from which the bush has been cleared. There is no attempt at regularity, it straggles about, up and down the hills, and a very little way outside, the bush closes in again and rolls away, range beyond range, hill beyond hill, clothed as with dark green fur. To seawards a yellow flat stretches to the sand-dunes. Gaunt, dead trees stand on the flat, and a ragged forest of white-pine borders it ; there are pools and bogs surrounded



by waving marsh grasses, and a river wanders through undecidedly in many streams. They told us it is the richest alluvial gold deposit on the coast, and were that plain drained and mined, gold lies in bands and pockets in fabulous measure. I was shown a coloured section of its supposed riches, that made one wonder why everyone was not digging there ! Indeed, I imbibed the spirit of Ross—which is a chastened kind of gold fever—very quickly, and found myself continually scanning the ground, and peering into creeks, or picking up bits of brown stone they called “ Maori stone,” and which they told us only occurred near gold.

Might not some one of those streams contain potential chances of a fortune ? Indeed, many a one has been made—and lost—here. In those now far-off days, when the gold rush was at its height, men penetrated far into the ranges—by the creeks and rivers ; camping sometimes together, sometimes alone, with perhaps but a rude *wharé* of boughs to shelter them. They dug and washed for gold in the creeks with the most primitive of outfits, amidst much toil and privation ; and the solitaries came to be known as “ Hatters,” the only explanation I ever got of the term being, that if they had nothing else to wash in, they washed in their hats ! Further south, we came now and again on a “ Hatter ”—usually some old and broken man, who had taken possession of a digger’s forsaken hut, and from sheer force of

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habit spent his days delving and washing in his creek. Most of them nowadays subsist on the old-age pension of ten shillings a week, and perhaps the kindness of friends—but ready always to give a welcome to the passer-by. Some of these old men could tell strange tales of old Australian days, when life ran hot and furious in the saloons and on the race-courses, and money went as fast as it came—there was always the lucky chance luring men on. A man might arrive at night worth his £500, and leave the little township next day without a penny. And if they played hard, they worked hard too, and endured hardships and privations little heard of nowadays. In the end the successful ones went back to civilization, or took up land and settled down with wife and family. The failures drifted away, leaving a few old derelicts, whose ties were too long broken to be mended, and the mate they worked with dead and gone. But Ross has gone ahead since those days, and gold-mining demands all the latest machinery, and sluicing on a vast scale is carried on. We came in for a very wet day during our stay, and I spent it climbing about behind the town among the old workings, where chasms yawned whose bottoms were filled with black waters, and where one scrambled over mountainous heaps of broken rock and *débris*. In all directions the hills were gashed and rent by the power of the sluicing hose. Here and there, amid blackened stumps, some forest giant still green held up

CROSSING THE MIKONI L.



protesting arms to heaven ; tangled masses of tree-ferns and creepers still sent out living fronds and tendrils, though pitched headlong down the scree—everywhere ugliness and ruin :

“ The ruined beauty wasted in a night,
The blackened wonder God alone could plan,
And builds not twice ! A bitter price to pay
Is this for progress—beauty swept away.”

But the ruin and the ugliness are inevitable. Where there is gold, all outside beauty must flee away before the digger. The disused workings were a desolate place on a wet afternoon, and broken sheds and rusting machinery depressed one ; and as I viewed these things, I sorrowed for the passing of the Forest. Behind me the hills were hidden in a pall of rain ; in front stretched the gold-flat with a ragged row of poplars on its marshy edge ; beyond that again, a blank wall of mist hid the Pacific, moaning sullenly on the sand. I was glad to come in to tea and a cheerful fire from these meditations.

In the hotel we had visitors. The only harbour-master south of Hokitika came and told us tales of a wonderful region where few have been ; where the olivine rocks shine blood-red on either side of a tremendous gorge. “ It’s the finest sight you’ll ever see,” said he ; “ the road’s none too good ; you’ll need be careful in the rivers, specially the Haast ; there’s many a man’s been washed down in the Haast, and they never come out alive—no, nor do the bodies neither.” We questioned him as to distance and accommodation. His brother-in-law

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would put us up, and he lived at the very end of the Main South Road, where it can go no further because of an impassable country of deep fiords and mountains guarded by precipices. This sounded truly fascinating. Like the harbour-master, the parson was the last on the Coast. He might travel 200 miles and come to no parish boundary, and to visit those few sheep in the wilderness meant long days in the saddle and on foot in that lonely land. There was a doctor too, also the last, and from him we heard of a wild night ride, seventy miles through rivers and over mountains, to save a woman's life ; and how when he had done his share, he found there was no one to nurse her but men who knew not what to do ; how he sat by her bed tending her for a week till the danger was past, and another urgent summons came for him to go back ; of the terrible ride through flooded rivers, in storm and rain, ten hours on relays of horses ; to fall ill at the end from exposure and fatigue.

But Ross was a very different place when the sun shone, and I forgot all the dismal impressions, and remembered only the kindness and friendliness of everybody. We left it on one of those wonderful balmy West Coast days of perfect blue—blue of sky and water, bush and mountain : is there anything in the whole world like it ? Riding out of the town we passed the sluicing operations in full swing ; saw the irresistible power of the great hose turned on the face of a hill that came crashing

down before it in tons of red clay and rock. We saw the muddy water flow back from the cliff face into channels paved with wood, where it leaves its silt from which the gold is taken ; heard how this, later, is melted into rude bricks to be sent away ; and the man who explained it to us told us that they were at present taking out £4,000 a month. I think those bricks must be just like the talents of gold of King Solomon. The roar and noise were deafening ; and they told us, were the man who seemed with such ease to direct the nozzle of the hose to get in front, he would be dashed against the cliff like a straw in the wind. Round the bend of the hill almost all trace of man and his works ceased, and we rode along the fringe of the bush some distance inland, with the sea on our right hand, through ever-changing scenes. Now it was across a wide river-bed, through blue streams breast-deep ; now down a leafy tunnel where the great trees met, and all beneath, save for that lonely road, was a tangle of creepers, lianes, and ferns. The sunlight lay in bright patches among the tracery of mauve shadows on the road ; or at times the shade was too dense for sun to penetrate. Vistas opened of far-rolling hills and purple gorges, clothed everywhere with unbroken forest—no impression had been made by the few small clearings along the coast on that great solitude. We saw ahead of us a house, the Waitaha, with name and sign, all alone in a clearing by the roadside ; beyond it the road led

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on and on straight through the heart of the bush. Here we halted. We strolled away in the afternoon to see Lake Ianthe, being told it was but three-and-a-half miles off ; but it seemed nearer five. At any rate it was well worth the walk. The road wound down to it through magnificent forest, where the tree-ferns expanded glorious fronds fifteen or twenty feet long, and everywhere grew a wealth of exquisite greenery. Strange new forms—new at least to our eyes—constantly attracted the attention. What the forest lacks in brilliancy of flowers, it gains in its wonderful variety of form. Except the ratas and a red honeysuckle, most of the flowers are white, or green and inconspicuous ; but their perfumes are there, and every shade of green and gold and brown. Between the tall shafts of the trees we caught glimpses of a shining water, and we made our way to the shore and sat there entranced. The reflections were perfect : every leaf and twig, mountain summit, and sunset cloud lay there, as in a great looking-glass.

The snows of the distant Alps were flushing rosy-pink above the dark hills, clothed always to their tops with trees. And as we sat and watched, the water at our feet became golden with the reflection of the rosy cloudlets floating in it. Colours like the inside of a pearl-shell blended, and faded, and the evening mists crept over all, and we turned back down the darkening forest aisles. And as we went, the moonlight laid



black bars across the road, and touched the giant ferns with silver, and every sound was hushed. Surely it was at Lake Ianthe the enchanted forest world began to speak to us, and bid us understand ?

We heard we should have a forty-two mile ride next day, because the next stopping-place was occupied by a party of bridge-builders, and there was no room for ladies. So we made an early start—only those who have ridden out thus into the forest in the freshness of early morning, can know anything of its perfect beauty. It is a different beauty from the glory of noon-day, or when the evening shadows fall : it seems to cry aloud and sing for joy. The tuis and the bell-birds were calling with those notes that, for me at least, have far more music than the nightingale's—no bird, unless perhaps the bul-bul, has any notes like them. I only asked to go on and on : give me more, ever more, of these sights and sounds, these perfumes, this utter loveliness !

As we passed Ianthe it lay all blue and fair in its setting of green, the water just ruffled here and there by a light breeze. Two large rivers, the Little Wanganui and the Big Wanganui were crossed with ease, though as we went south they were getting more turbulent. There is a little settlement here, where we stopped for a ten-o'clock breakfast. Our welcome was, as always, most kindly, and we were given fried trout with new potatoes, apricots and cream—a truly astonishing

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bill of fare ! They told us we were very lucky in thus crossing the rivers, for the heat was bringing down sudden floods from the melting snows in the ranges.

When we left this sunny, beautiful spot, we entered on a lonely bit of road, except for an isolated house or two at long intervals, which looked helplessly small face to face with the forest. Rosy children would run out from them to wave to us, and I always wanted to go in and see who lived in these lonely spots. I did too, sometimes. I used to hear touching little tales, and the women especially were glad to see me. Once it was a story of a young girl, brought up in the palace at Copenhagen who followed her sailor-husband out to this far land, in utter ignorance of the life before her. She found herself alone—cut off by rivers on each side from neighbours twenty miles away. She dared not cross them on her horse ; the forest frightened her as much as the rivers. “ What did you do ? ” I asked. “ I cried for two years ; then my baby came—that comforted me, and I cheered up a bit. I gave up thinking about getting back when I had three or four of them wanting everything ! ” Now they are all grown men and women, and in forty years she has never seen one of her own people. She showed me groups and photographs taken in Denmark : the beautiful old burgher house, with grave, prosperous-looking men and women ; the palace and the streets of Copenhagen. How

much lay behind that little story ; but it was only one among many—the common lot of a pioneer's wife.

Far south it is even more isolated—only this generation has been born and brought up on the Coast. The old generation came from another world. There is a certain sense forced upon one of the smallness and feebleness of man, when brought face to face with the Forest—when from some hill-top you look out over that undulating sea of green-blue hills and valleys, all untrodden, all impenetrable, wherein is no open track or glade save only up the bed of a torrent. Then it is borne in on the mind how easily one could be lost—“swallowed in vastness, lost in silence, drowned in the deeps of a meaningless past.”

About mid-day we were crossing Mount Hercules. From its summit we gazed out over the wide flat of the Wataroa ; miles and miles of rolling country—part yellow plain, part billowy forest—spread like a map at our feet. The Main South Road descended here in loops across the face of a mighty bluff—down, down ; one side of the road was fringed by the tops of the tallest trees below, the other was overhung by crags with clinging trees and ferns. At last we got to the bottom. A fairly straight road ran between dykes and tall marsh-grass, where the red-legged pukakis rose and flapped away, their blue-black plumage shining in the sun. Mile after mile we travelled onwards,

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crossing many small rivers. The heat in this wide country was very great, and we were thankful to see an arcade of shady trees ahead. Their boles were literally stuck over with big black and grey crickets, whose myriad voices filled the air—so loud they almost prevented talk ! Then we came to a hut, and a notice that one might, in an emergency, summon the ferryman by telephone. A little further the wide river-bed spread out in a fan-shaped desert of boulders and shingle, dead trees, and islands of grass and scrub. We could see the ferryman coming across to meet us, and we waited for him. He reported the river as fordable, and another wayfarer catching us up, we three entered it in single file. The Wataroa was decidedly the swiftest and deepest river we had crossed, but the horses came through bravely, without having to swim—although at one time it seemed like it. The accommodation-house was half-a-mile further on—the old one by the river having been carried away in a flood. This present one was really the barn and stables, and every inch of room was occupied by the party of thirteen who were cutting timber for the new bridge. We could vouch for it, it was not the only place which stood badly in need of one ! The ferryman came with us to the house. He was a German, very powerfully built ; and we heard he has saved many lives in the Wataroa—even when washed down with a drunken man, he could keep his head and bring his helpless charge out alive—no mean feat.



IN FRONT OF THE WATAROA HOTEL

Our host and hostess were terribly grieved at having to send us eleven miles farther, and tried to make up for it by feeding us sumptuously. The talk ranged over many subjects—the Sistine Madonna to Holman Hunt's “Light of the World” among them—and we found the ferryman was something of an enthusiast, and knew his Dresden Gallery well. Our host was a man of much reading, and told us how in the old camping days they were a strangely mixed crew, hailing from all parts of the world ; sometimes Oxford and Cambridge men among them—come gold-seeking or exploring like the rest. These would insist on the others in camp reading, so as to be able to keep the talk going round the fire at nights ; and an enthusiasm for history, Shakespeare, and the “Saturday Review” grew up. Men lent books to one another, and the budgets of papers when they arrived, were eagerly read and handed on.

“ Ah ! ” said our host, “ they were good old days ! We youngsters learnt a lot mixing with men of education ; it was grand to sit round the fire o' nights and hear the talk—and they made us enter into it too, for they insisted on us reading. We have the schools now all down the Coast, but there's not the same chance ; we never hear the talk we did in the early days.” At every place they were loud in praise of the Government. A telephone connecting the whole length of the Coast was under construction, and soon every small settlement would have its connection. One

of the women said to me : “ It’s almost the same thing as having neighbours and living in town ; we can talk to each other in the evenings—they let us keep the wire as long as we like. Oh, I don’t mind the bush now we’ve got the telephone ! ”

But the afternoon sun was drawing towards the west, and we mounted once more, and rode away on the lonely road skirting the foot-hills that always reminded me of the coast of a yellow sea. Here it was part marshland, part good grazing—surely when the plain is drained it will wave with golden crops and raise the finest cattle in the West. Late that evening we came to Lake Whahapo—a silver mirror, where a crested grebe made its slow way across in an ever-widening V of ripples. Tiny lamps of phosphorescent light glowed under the ferns that bordered the track—tired as I was, the peace and beauty of it all held me in its spell. Just as it grew dark we reached the Forks Inn. There was light enough to make out the stables across the road, and to recognize Mr. Heveldt, the host, who came and led away the horses, while his jolly Irish wife gave us hearty welcome. It was a merry household, and as Transome washed at a tin basin in the kitchen, I could hear peals of laughter as she entertained him the while—interlarding her remarks with threats to “ Kill Baby Franz Josef, if he wasn’t a good boy ! ” She called the baby after the glacier—not the Emperor.

All night a torrent outside roared and tumbled. Whenever I awoke I heard its never-ceasing voice

THE FORKS.



—truly in South Westland one is never out of sight and sound of running water. Whether it be of the great rivers hurrying to the sea, or the white cascades or streams rippling fetlock-deep across the track, that voice of many waters is always in one's ears. There are times when the fierceness of the rivers fills one with a sense of impotence. A wide river-bed strewn with tree trunks and enormous boulders when the flood comes down—and they chafe and roll in wild turmoil—is an awesome enough sort of place. And the more you have to do with New Zealand rivers, the stronger becomes the awe in which you hold them. On the west they are often not twenty miles long in their whole course, and rising as they do in the snows of the high Alps, the rush of water is terrific for nine months of the year. It is almost as if they were live things possessed by some spirit, ready to work disaster to those who meddle with them. From this place, named the Forks, we had a choice of ways—either to continue to the coast, visiting Okarito on its lagoon—one of the last nesting-places in the South Island of the white crane*—or to turn inland along the Southern Alps. The road leads by Mapourika, most beautiful perhaps of New Zealand lakes, lying below the jagged peaks of the Minarets. Beyond, the great Franz Josef glacier winds down from those homeless wastes of ice and

* Or rather heron (*Herodias timoriensis*): ranges from China through Malay Archipelago to Australasia.

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snow, where the Minarets and Mount Dela Bêche rear up like islands from the white expanse of the Tasman and adjoining glaciers. From their summits one looks, on the one hand across the eastern plains, and on the other over this green Western land of streams and forests, as Moses looked from Pisgah. Verily it is a Promised Land, but as yet the inheritance has not been wholly entered upon.

Mapourika is beautiful at all times in that wonderful setting of forest and mountain, but when the sunset flush on the peaks above is mirrored in the windless lake, and every tree and fern springs from its own double along the shore, I think it comes very near being Paradise. We decided we must see both, so Okarito and its cranes might come first.



THE MINARETS FROM THE TASMAN GLACIER.

CHAPTER III.

OKARITO.

Watch the cloud and shadow sailing o'er the forest's sombre breast ;
Misty capes and snow-cliffs glimmer on the ranges to the west.
Hear the distant thunder rolling ; surely 'tis the making tide,
Swinging all the blue Pacific on the harbour's iron side
Now the day grows grey and chill, but see on yonder wooded fold,
Between the clouds a ray of sunshine slips, and writes a word in gold.

ANNE GLENNY WILSON.

THE very name had an odd charm about it—something suggestive and musical. I looked curiously at the line of weather-beaten little grey houses straggling along a stretch of green above the beach—a grey beach of stones and shingle with hardly any sign of life, except a few children and one or two cows and horses straying about. Whatever its future, Okarito belongs to the past—to the day when busy mushroom-towns sprang up in the track of the gold-seekers ; when the eager, shifting throng rushed from place to place as reports spread of fabulous finds of gold. I doubt if there were, when I saw it, fifteen inhabited houses, counting the two hotels ; yet they told me once it had boasted twenty-five hotels and three theatres, and a population of several thousands ! One wonders where they all are to-day. A great and abiding peace possesses it, and it was hard to realize the tales I heard of the days of the gold fever, when those grey sands of the beach yielded a wondrous

golden harvest ; when, on many a moonlight night every man, woman, and even child, might have been seen digging frantically on the tide-line at some low ebb, when certain bands of black sand were exposed ; running the sand up in barrows, carrying it in baskets, heaping up the precious harvest above high-water mark, working with mad haste till the tide turned and covered these gold-bearing sands until the next low tide. Then the days following would be spent “washing,” and many a one would carry his billy full of good yellow gold to sell it to the rude little bank, and find he was the richer by a few hundreds after a lucky spell. But it was “lightly come, lightly go,” with most of them, and few, it seemed to me, kept their riches to any useful purpose.* They were ever on the move—the fever for ever driving them to try new diggings, where, as often as not, they found nothing. There seems to have been a strong code of honour among them—that respected each other’s gains : was there not an equal chance for every man ? Where there was no regular police, public opinion safeguarded the digger.

The road comes to Okarito winding by tree-clad promontories and broad bays of the wide lagoon, which stretches its silvery fingers far among the hills. It is partly tidal ; at low water there are pearly-coloured tide-flats where busy

* NOTE.—The prohibitive cost of the barest necessities of life ruined many a gold-seeker in the early days—the forests around produced only birds, and all stores were carried on pack-horses from place to place and sold at ruinous prices.



ON OKARITO LAGOON.

waders run to and fro or stand sentinel at the water's edge. Everywhere it is fringed with bush and tall tree-ferns, except to seaward. There it is shut in by flax-swamp and grey sand-dunes, on the other side of which the long rollers thunder night and day. I don't believe the Pacific knows how to ripple in gently over ribbed sea sand. There is always that dull roar sounding far inland—less at times, but always there.

The road led past the wharf with its goods shed, and beyond this is the entrance to the lagoon—a narrow opening through which the tides surge in and out. Like all West Coast harbours, the bar is the great drawback, and the small coasting steamer, the "*Jane Douglas*," is the largest craft that can enter. Just outside the houses, on a fence, we found the town Crane. For some years he has attached himself to town life, and stalks about unconcernedly ; and woe be to any one who would interfere with him ! There are only a few pairs of these birds left, but they are closely protected, and it is hoped they may increase—anyway Okarito public opinion allows no shooting at them ! They are very beautiful birds, with a graceful dorsal egret-plume, and pure white. We were met by our acquaintance, Mr. Thompson the harbour-master, who had quite a programme arranged for our benefit. We were to be taken on the lagoon and, if possible, shown the nesting-places of the cranes ; to be shown the view from the headland beyond the town, and introduced

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generally to Okarito. Later in the day he came for us as the tide was pouring in like a mill-race ; and our boat was carried swiftly along a channel between silvery mud-flats, where red-footed oyster-catchers and long-legged stilts were running about. You can row for miles at high tide—one view after another unfolding of wooded bays, of towering snow peaks mirrored in still waters, of forest rolling away into blue distance with great patches of scarlet on its outer fringe, and overhead soft skies with clouds for ever sliding from the sea to the mountains. There are islands where the tree-ferns droop their long fronds above their reflections in the quiet waters ; channels of still, brown water winding far into the heart of the forest. Down one of them we rowed into the mystery of its cool green depths, beneath a canopy of crimson ratas, and almost tropical growth along its edge. It seemed to wander endlessly among the trees, but eventually came out again on the lagoon. Here there is a swannery of the wild black swans, and innumerable wild duck. We were told of boat-loads of swans' eggs taken every year, but the birds are too numerous to be much affected.

Of the white cranes we saw but three—nor did we see a nest, and had to be contented with the harbour-master's description of how he found one with the mother-bird on the eggs, sitting in the heart of a tree-fern. The families of ducks were greatly disturbed by our presence, the old birds flying up and down with distressed cries, or flapping

along with apparently wounded wing in front of our bows. It is curious how these birds, especially the large Paradise-duck, all have the habit, even in the most unfrequented solitudes, and will act decoy to get one away from the little ones.

But the tide was turning, and unless we meant to sit six hours on a tide-flat, it was necessary to row across to the harbour.

We were very comfortable in our hotel, and the horses were in a good paddock, and it seemed a pity to hurry away ; so we spent three very lazy pleasant days. We explored the foot of the Bluff beyond the signal-station, where the iron-black cliffs overhang a beach strewn with the tumbled fragments of the hills—where even in this calm weather the Pacific chafed and surged relentlessly. Fifty years ago this was the only possible road, and many a life was lost as man and horse struggled to round those Bluffs before the tide came up. Tired out, they stumbled along that inhospitable shore after a hopeless struggle with the equally inhospitable bush, only to find themselves cut off at the Bluff. No escape then from the rushing tide that sent up its long arms and picked off man and beast, and carried them to destruction in the irresistible back-rush.

When we, too, came to beach-riding later on, I always thought of the tales I had heard. Swamps were bad, and rivers were dangerous, but the Pacific was a worse foe than any. Over the Bluff I went one afternoon with the harbour-master's

daughter, and from its summit gazed southward. Blue headland beyond blue headland, wide beaches faintly violet stretching between them ; mountains and clouds lying behind the sea haze—all mysterious, all unknown. Far down beyond that farthest headland, where perhaps the great Haast river ran, we meant to go.

Flowers grew along this track, fringing it delicately with mauve and purple. Dainty butterworts nodded their heads from their hair-like stems, and other flowers grew in sprays of blue with pink buds, which I took to be orchids —*Thelymitra*, perhaps.

Then we turned and looked back at Okarito. There it lay by its lagoon : a forgotten corner, once so full of life. Far away stretched reaches of grey and opal water, edged by violet hills ; now and again a couple of black swans winged their way across the placid surface—they, and the tiny curls of smoke ascending into the still air, were the only signs of life.

My companion begged me to come to tea, saying her mother was from home, and she was in charge of the family. There were six younger than herself and she was but sixteen—thus do girls on the Coast learn to be women. As we sat over our tea, a visitor and her baby arrived, and I heard of the great disappointment the town had just sustained.

It seems the “Jane Douglas,” on her coasting trips, is sometimes delayed by the harbour bar, and has been shut in as long as two months at a time,



TREE-FERNS ON THE FRINGE OF THE BUSH.

and occasionally she cannot enter at all. This time she could not get out, and after a fortnight's waiting the Captain sent for his wife ; one of the crew did the same, and they prepared to spend Christmas there. Okarito likewise prepared. There were to be pic-nics, to which everyone would go old and young ; races on the sands, and a ball. Alas ! the night before the festivities were to have commenced, a change of wind set the tide scouring out the bar ; the ladies were hastily taken on board, and at daybreak the "*Jane Douglas*" steamed away, leaving the town lamenting over its unfulfilled social engagements, and one promising romance at least unfinished !

I don't know why one gets so interested in all the events on the Coast. I think it must be because all the people know each other, and are mostly related. Every place we stopped at we brought messages from relatives further north—no such formalities as letters of introduction, except in one instance—and we were thus handed on by a kind of post, being ourselves both mail-bag and letters. And these messages served as so many links in a long chain that stretched from Hokitika to Okuru.

As we stood outside the house on the signalling platform, I was shown a lagoon in the sand beneath, left by a high tide a month before, and in it they said was a ten-foot shark. When I strolled back I found Transome sitting contentedly smoking on a bench before the hotel. He remarked : "At last I found a decent bathing-place

in a jolly little lagoon," and I found he must have bathed with the shark !

Strange visitors do come to these shores at times, and some months after this a whale, eighty-seven feet long, was washed ashore. The monster was as high as a cottage—the flukes alone being fifteen feet long. Eventually it was bought by public subscription, the soft parts dug away, and the skeleton dispatched to the Christchurch museum. The accounts of that whale's adventures would make a story in itself. Next day we started for the Waiho gorge, I being driven in the harbour-master's trap, his lad riding Tom, and the blacksmith's daughter, mounted on a handsome little chestnut, joining the party. We stopped at her father's some ten miles further on, where we left the horses to be shod, I driving on in front to the accommodation-house, known as Batson's, at the entrance to the Waiho gorge.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAIHO GORGE AND A HATTER.

The spear-grass crackles under the billy, and overhead is the winter's sun ;
There's snow on the hills, there's frost in the gully, that minds me of things that I've seen and done,
Of blokes that I knew, and mates that I've worked with, and the sprees we had in the days gone by ;
And a mist comes up from my heart to my eyelids ; I feel fair sick, and I wonder why.

DAVID MCKEE WRIGHT.

THE harbour-master and I continued our way to a straggling little settlement at the foot of precipitous bush-clad hills, the outliers of the high ranges behind. Deep gorges with foaming torrents cleft them in all directions, and we drove across a flat where the road winds amid scrub and stones and yellow grasses, with the Waiho river eddying among its boulders on the right hand. As one proceeds, one of the finest, and perhaps one of the strangest, views in the world unfolds ; for where else can we hope to find a combination of colour like this ? The dark mountains rising purple to the snow, peak beyond peak of the Southern Alps soaring white against that wondrous blue—so close they seem, so attainable—it is hard to realize they are 10,000 feet above us. And between two mountain walls, filling a mighty gorge, winds down the Franz Josef glacier ; an icy chaos of pinnacles and seracs, green-blue and glittering white against

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the purple-black crags of the gorge. But strangest of all is where the glacier and the forest meet, and the splendid scarlet of the ratas seems almost to touch the ice and snow. The forest itself, ringed with vivid green of tree-fern and a hundred sub-tropical plants, adds the last touch of vivid contrast. Rhododendrons against Himalayan snow may come to mind, but Himalayan landscapes are too vast This is South Westland, and nowhere else. We, who have seen it, want to compare it with nothing else. The glacier comes down to the very fringe of the tree-ferns and the ratas, to within 600 feet of sea level and ten miles of the sea—as the crow flies ; and this in a climate moist and warm for the greater part of the year—a climate that favours the most varied production of rare and lovely ferns, astelias, and many a shrub and plant cultivated with utmost care at home. Was it any wonder that I gazed spell-bound—trying to take it in, as the eye travelled over that marvellous picture ?

There was a fine new hotel being built out on the flat, but we drove to the little old accommodation-house at the edge of the bush—a punga house, i.e., built of fern-logs on end, filled in with moss and grass. A house of this kind may even grow—for the ferns are very tenacious of life, and I have seen a fence where the posts were nearly all sending out spreading heads of beautiful fern.

There was a central guest-room ; and other little rooms had been added as they were needed.



FRANZ JOSEF: WHERE THE GLACIER AND THE FOREST MEET. 13

Each had its own outer door, and as the windows were not made to open, I had to keep my door open all night, and as I lay in bed could hear the rumbling of the glacier and the roaring of the Waiho, and see the stars as they marched across the sky. There was also a store and a post-office, and a weekly coach-service, for the Waiho boasts a gold mine—of which more later. Near the store there is a room where a service is held once in two months, for the diggers and dwellers in the gorge, and we heard there had been a congregation of nineteen that Sunday. The parson was making one of his periodical visitations, and came to meet us as we went up to the punga house. The store was a fascinating place, and I felt sure we should lay in some indispensable things for our further trip, but I could only get stamps—the cord-soled shoes, picks, billies, buckets, axe-heads, and other useful things we left. Transome tried to buy a hat. He had started in a new Panama, which, from repeated wettings and sittings-on, was shrunk and threatening to fall into holes ; but it seemed a hat was the one thing the store could not provide.

That first afternoon we devoted to the inspection of the hot springs. It was indescribably weird to have a pool of boiling water close to a glacier ! We went up along a torrent-bed, and in a clearing on the edge of the bush was a corrugated-iron hut,* a simple sort of bath-house with a wooden trough

* NOTE.—This also has changed in the three years since my visit, and been replaced by a bath-house and three modern baths.

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sunk in the floor. A bench ran round the walls, and a small hand-pump brought up the evil-smelling water, at such a temperature one had to wait for it to cool before bathing. If the extreme potency of the smell were any gauge for the potency of the water-cure, there ought to be a hydro here—never have I smelt anything so horrid. Transome preferred to bathe in the hot pool outside, taking a cold douche in the torrent after, and certainly all traces of fatigue vanished like magic, and we agreed it was a wonderful spring. There was a rugged path climbing up the steep hill behind, and here we came on the Eremite, who dwelt like the dryad of this strange place.

When we saw him first he was advancing to meet us—bare-headed, in a tattered old brown jersey, and much-worn pants held together by a strap, but greeting us right cheerily, and bidding us welcome to his house. The house itself stood in the heart of the forest tangle. The sort of place one only finds on the borders of civilization—there was more chimney than house: a veritable stack of planks and logs, and why it did not burn down I can't imagine. Inside was a huge hearth, and the one room was but the *annexe* to the chimney. Outside the house, a little plateau had been built up with infinite pains, and here was an attempt at a garden. Just a few potatoes and straggling strawberry plants. The hillside below this fell away steeply to a ravine, and standing there one gazed out over a glorious vista of rolling

hills and forest, to the far-away coast line and the hazy sea. Having welcomed us, the Eremite dived into the dark recess of his dwelling, emerging again with a bottle and a tumbler. "Come in, come in," he invited us, "and taste my home brew"; and as we declined to enter: "Well, you'll take a glass anyway"—and forthwith he poured out some of his herb-beer. I hope we did not hurt his feelings by any seeming reluctance, but truth to tell it was a fearsome decoction, and a sip was enough. He then set off to hunt for strawberries, and presented me with two—there was quite a promising colony established on his roof. "Now," he said, "you'll come down into my gold mine," and with incredible agility he set off down the ravine, scrambling over rocks, and hopping from stone to stone like an uncouth old bird. He had paved a little runnel which he calls his "race," and at the bottom was the scene of his labours. A crowbar, a pick, and a shovel lay near; here he delves in the grit and *débris* of the old working, apparently quite happy. His face fell for a moment when I asked if he ever got any gold out of it. "Not for a long time now; no, not for a long time—it may be two years and more since gold came out of it." But he cheered up immediately, and scrambled back to his *wharé*, and came a little way with us to show us the best road. We learnt he had squatted there for eight years quite alone, and went by the name of "Piggery Charlie."

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I was glad to hear poor Charlie was an old-age pensioner, and did not depend on the gold-mine for a living. Next day I took him a present of tobacco, and got an even warmer welcome. Out came the bottle and tumbler, but I pleaded the early hour as an excuse, and was then taken inside, where Charlie began rummaging in an awful litter of things, and presently found what he wanted. I should think the biscuits he now handed me were years old, quite mouldy, and little currants sticking in them. Charlie was bent on being hospitable. Next came out bundles of letters and piles of unopened newpapers from London—for though he has wandered in the wilderness here and in Australia this fifty years, his people have not forgotten him. He was indeed a typical “Hatter.” Said Charlie: “If you’ll marry me and come up here, I’ll make a fine place of it. I’ll cut down the bush, and I’ll get a cow.” I assured him—however alluring this prospect for my future settlement in life might be—it was quite impossible, and I rose to go. But I had only gone a few yards on the path when he came flying after me, with a newspaper wrapper with his name and address. The last I saw of my “Hatter,” he was waving farewells and shouting after me: “You’ll think of it, won’t you?—and I’ll get the cow, and make a grand place of it.” My heart was always sorry for these lonely old men we found. They who, in the days of their youth and strength, often handled their hundreds—now only old hangers-on,



[N.Z. Government Tourist Department
THE FRANZ JOSEPH GLACIER: LOOKING DOWN THE GORGE.]

waiting out their few years, clinging to the scenes they know—nowhere else for them in the wide world. The companies get all the gold nowadays ; the Hatters are the last of their race.

I crossed the gorge by a bridge suspended high in air, just two planks with wires on both sides—a slip, and there would have been no more wandering ! Far beneath, the Waiho churned and boiled in yellow foam, and the bridge swayed alarmingly. On the other side was a bit of road leading past a trim cottage with green doors and windows, and a garden gay with flowers. The forest shut it in, and the grim walls of the Waiho gorge rose behind, and in the pleasant living-room I sat and chatted long ; heard tales of the five stalwart sons, and of the grandchildren, of the diggers in the gorge, and the Hatters among the hills. The mountains and the forest and the great glacier are, to the old lady who lives there under shadow of the everlasting hills, “ The wonderful works of God : Can we have anything but good when we live so close to the grand works of our Father ? ” And to her the Church Service every other month is, “ The oasis in the desert of our lives, where we can drink of the Water of Life.” We never met again, but we seemed to have known each other always.

There was the gold-nine still to visit, and on a very wet afternoon we set out under the parson’s escort to see it. He led us up the Callery gorge with the rain coming down, as it can come in the

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West—sheets and buckets of water ; and we plunged into dripping bush, where water poured in all directions in streams and rivulets. The trees were literally clothed with ferns ; filmy ferns crept along the branches, and kidney-ferns draped the trunks with their exquisite green lobes. Mosses, green and lovely, covered everything, and for a little way we went among the living green : but then came the abomination of desolation. . . . we stood on the raw edge of a scar that tore the hill-side open. Grey rocks and stones were hurled in confusion ; along the edge of the gaping wound tottering trees still clung, or pitched headlong down, mixed with tree-ferns and ratas—a world of loveliness lay destroyed at our feet. On all hands was evidence of sluicing operations. Up a steep hill opposite, a line of felled trees showed where the great pipes were laid which brought that tremendous force of water to the hose, and the din in the air from the discharging water was terrific. Down below we watched men in top-boots and oilskins at work. They had just finished sluicing, and were moving the dirt along a wooden channel at the bottom. It was something of a scramble to get down, mud and stones and clay came away at every step, and water ran down in one's tracks. Arrived at the bottom, the foreman came forward and the men gathered round, all anxious we should see everything. Some had coarse rakes, and one an old shovel, and they showed me the movable blocks, fitting

like a large mosaic in a kind of trough, over which the *débris* is raked after a fresh portion of the hill has been sluiced. The fine mud settles, and about once a fortnight they lift the blocks and wash the silt. That day they had taken out £64 worth of gold. With a scrub-brush and an old fire-shovel—or was it a dustpan?—the foreman lifted some mud and proceeded to “wash” it in a battered old tin-basin. And presently he laid upon my palm several little yellow discs. They were quite thin and round, and varied from the size of a pin-head to a threepenny bit. I gazed at them wonderingly—so unlike what I expected. “That’s glacier gold,” said he, “we don’t know where the reef it came from was, but it was somewhere up there in the mountains. It’s been squeezed and flattened right enough in the ice, and carried down till it got buried in these old moraines.” He told me most of these steep foot-hills were old moraine—and another odd thing was, that they often find a bullet when they are washing! How it gets there, when there have been so few people to shoot seems a mystery. Geologists tell us the Southern Alps are but half as high as in the age when the great ice-cap covered these islands, and that our present glaciers are but the shrinking remains of those vanished ones which wore down these hills, and gouged out these valleys. It is a long story since these little yellow discs got scraped up by the ice-plough, and carried along till they were melted out in this old moraine. A very long

story till to-day, when the Waiho Company comes with its rakes and shovels, tearing down the everlasting hills—all for the sake of these same little yellow discs. It was all so fascinating : I would dearly have loved to stay there and wash silt in the basin ! With difficulty I was got away from that muddy trench. My companions were already calling to me from above, and I looked aghast at the means to get out—a scaffolding (rather than ladder) up which they had so nimbly scrambled—I had to pull myself up from bar to bar as best I might, unaided by rope or hand-rail. Once at the top, I waved farewell to the men below ; we said good-bye to the parson, and Transome and I set off to get a nearer view of the glacier. It was about three o'clock, and the rain had ceased, but water poured down in all directions across the track, and the trees and ferns dripped moisture. It was really quite a good pathway, winding along about half-way up the right side of the gorge, with the tumultuous Waiho below us. The dense growth continued to quite near the ice ; unknown plants and shrubs met the eye everywhere. Strange dracophyllums raised their branched stems twenty or thirty feet high, with purplish aloe-like leaves—no one would believe, to look at them, that these curious trees could belong to the heaths, yet such is the fact. They bear closely-packed panicles of red flowers, sometimes a foot-and-a-half long. *D. latifolium* is red, while *D. longifolium* is white, and there are five or six others in the family, so



ICE FORMATION ON THE FRANZ JOSEF

exceedingly unlike one another that they look like plants of different genera. The Maori name is *nei-nei*, but the settlers call it the grass-tree. When the forest came to an end, we entered on a dreary extent of moraine—a chaos of ridges and stones which filled the valley. In part it was overgrown by thickets of manuka scrub and tangles of hooked “lawyer,” and tufts of grass and herbs covered the ridges. In a hollow was a Government hut, with bunks and stores; just then, this was occupied by two men, who had been for some time trying to build a bridge across the glacier river. The work was well started, when the river departed to the other side of the gorge, making a new channel for itself; and the men were living there, waiting in hope of it coming back. They offered us tea, and came to show us the best way to the glacier-foot. The glacier lies in a wide valley, shut in by steep, black-looking mountains; and between their walls, for nine miles beyond this, the Franz Josef fills the whole space, five hundred to a thousand feet deep. At last we found ourselves actually standing below the glacier “snout”—an awful barricade of dirty ice, stones, and mud, from whose foot the muddy torrent swirled away to our left. There was no crossing it without a horse. Great blocks of ice had fallen that day, shooting right across it, and some lay in the stream obstructing its passage. We could only gaze up at the glacier-foot—a cold, wet air smote our faces, the clouds hung low to the mountains, only

glimpses to be caught of bare snow-slopes and mountain walls. All was dismal—"horrid," as Evelyn would have said—shrouded in mist. Yet, on the other hand, the valley was still clothed with many kinds of plants, and tree-veronicas and ratas flowered alongside the ice. Our guide had gone back after bringing us thus far, and we never thought of having the slightest difficulty in reaching the hut again. Now, when we turned to go, the whole place seemed to have changed. There was no one to ask our way, and the dusk was falling. Each stony ridge we climbed over we imagined to be the last, and that we should see the hut from its summit. But the hut was nowhere: it had vanished. A kind of despair seized us as we wandered hither and thither in the gathering gloom, seeing around us naught but stones:

"A great grey chaos—a land half-made,
Where endless space is, and no life stirreth ;
And the soul of a man will recoil afraid
From the sphinx-like visage that Nature weareth."

Far up in the mist near the glacier the men were calling and halloo-ing, but we had wandered so far now, they could not see us in the waning light. We strayed through this nightmare of a place—it was impossible we could miss two men and a hut, and spend the night among the stones, yet it began to look like it !

At last we saw a figure approaching over a ridge, and gladly went to meet it. The men had imagined that we had by some means got on to the glacier and knowing the danger, they had

been up looking for us. Thankfully we followed our guide to the hut—not a quarter of a mile away—and found his mate busy preparing a bush lantern. This serviceable and primitive invention is just a bottle with the bottom knocked out, and a candle stuck in the neck, carried upside-down. And glad we were of it when we plunged once more into the bush. The rain had come on again ; no ray of light except our candle illumined the blackness of darkness under the trees. Streams poured down noisily across the path, and from below us came the sullen roar of the Waiho in flood. Drip, drip, overhead, slop, slop, underfoot : we made our way in a darkness that might be felt. As I followed Transome clad in oilskin and sou'-wester, he looked like some hermit of old, bearing his torch aloft, guiding some lost pilgrim to his cell. The light thrown upwards on the wet trees and fern fronds, showing dark forms and the gleam of water, had a weird, theatrical effect, but it left the path itself in utter darkness, and one knew not where to place one's feet. How were we going to get across that narrow, swaying suspension-bridge like this ? To mend matters, when we came to where we thought it was, we could not find it. But at this tragical moment a flickering light, like a will-o'-the-wisp, came through the trees ; a cheery voice hailed us, and someone holding up his lantern showed us the supports of the suspension-bridge close over our heads. This friend-in-need guided us safely over

the black abyss, and brought us to the inn, and a welcome fire and supper. That was a wild night of wind and rain. The Waiho was in high flood next morning, and one could hear the shock and rumble of the enormous boulders grinding each other in the yellow-brown rush of water. No crossing was possible for horses. However, the sun came out, and we were assured three hours at least would carry off the flood. About eleven o'clock one of the men came to say the horses might attempt it, and we rode across the flat to the ford, and found the river divided into two streams, swirling by tumultuously. Huge brown waves curled in ycasty foam over the boulders—it looked a terrible place to venture in with horses. We were a party of five, and the horses breasted it bravely, but I was glad when we reached the other side. As we turned up the track of yesterday, how different it looked now with the blue sky above, and the leaves shining with moisture. Then we crossed the torrent, and leaving the horses on a shingle island, began a toilsome, muddy scramble up the barricade and on to the glacier. When we had climbed over the mountainous pile of frozen dirt and stones, and stood at last on the great frozen river, the ice proved to be in the worst possible condition. The waves of that river have tossed themselves into every fantastic shape. Glassy pinnacles and serrated edges rear themselves hundreds of feet over deep crevasses—at times it seemed like climbing the

[Rev. H. E. Norton
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LOOKING UP THE FRANZ JOSEF,
PHOTOGRAPH BY]



walls of a vast cathedral of crystal—and every step had to be cut. The colouring was marvellous: turquoise and green—and that blue of glacier-pools which is neither—mingled with opal and pink. Since then I have been on several other New Zealand glaciers, but never one of them all like this. In two hours we had not progressed a quarter of a mile, but we were high enough to see its winding course, and the glittering snow-fields at its head. Then we turned to look back. An enormous *roche moutonnée* seemed to block its course to one side, and we looked away beyond this to the waving forest with its crimson ratas, and Okarito lying in a blue haze. But it was cold work standing with one's feet in a little ice niche, and we could only move one at a time. We had seen enough for a first acquaintance with the glacier, and so we came down and rode back to the inn. Next day we were to start early and see the Fox, a glacier seventeen miles south of this—even larger, I believe, than the Franz Josef.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOREST WORLD.

..... the forest world, its wealth of life,
Its jostling, crowding, thrusting, struggling race,
Creeper with creeper, bush with bush at strife,
Warring and wrestling for a breathing space ;
Below, a realm with tangled rankness rife,
Aloft, tree-columns, shafts of stateliest grace.

W. P. REEVES.

THE bad weather had spent itself, and as we got ready early next morning, a cloudless sky above the snow-peaks betokened a glorious day. Good-byes were said, and we fared forth once more down the Main South Road. It made a brave show with wide, cleared margins for a couple of miles or so, then deserted us in a river-bed, and when we picked it up again, it had become a pack track. This very soon dwindled to a narrow footpath, winding into the heart of the hills. The sun slanted down through the great trees over head :

“ Their forest raiment from crown to feet
that clothed them royally,
Shielding their mysteries from the glare of day.”

Here, we were in a world untouched by man—save for that narrow, winding track—where the very birds seemed scarce to heed our presence, and the big bush-pigeons sat and looked at us from the miro trees—too lazy to fly away. The very loneliness but added to the wondrous,

mysterious charm of this forest world. On and on we rode in the dewy freshness: round steep mountain flanks, up deep gorges, along rock-cut ledges where the yellow sunshine lay bright and warm on the rocky way, catching at times vistas of high mountains towering above us, shrouded always in impenetrable bush—it was, above all things, a forest ride. Always there was the crowding undergrowth beneath—that riot of green-life, of forms strange to our eyes, beautiful in their infinite variety. And everywhere were ferns. Who shall tell of the exquisite beauty of that fernery? They seemed to grow in colonies, sometimes of one kind, sometimes of another; and every fallen mossy trunk was covered with delicate hymenophyllums, like green lace. They climbed along the living branches, they draped the brown stems of the tree-ferns from base to crown—there they live and die uncared for, generation after generation, perfect in their beauty. There are as many as twenty-nine of this species alone, from *H. rufescens* an inch long, to *H. dilatum* growing to a couple of feet or more. In shine and shade alike the kidney-fern* hung out its glossy lobes of satiny-emerald, shaped exactly as its name implies. They vary from an inch across to three or even four. They creep up the trees and over fallen logs, each separate leaf on its brown, hair-like stem, the delicate edge set with tiny, bead-like seed vessels. When the sun

* *frichomanes reniforme*.

shines through their fresh green, they seem almost transparent, and now and again one finds a lobe of golden-brown or coppery-red. As one gazed into dim green recesses, so shadowy and cool there seemed always something new to catch the eye. One was never satiated.

Where else does one see ferns growing in stories like a pagoda—whole colonies of them, two or three feet high ? The settlers call it the umbrella fern ;* and perhaps a little farther on grow huge clumps of the Prince-of-Wales' Feather,† its tips bent exactly like an ostrich plume. Other ferns, so fine they are like a skeleton leaf or dainty lace, grow in the bush—*Davallia*, and many another whose name I never knew—and over them everywhere drooped the tree-ferns, straight shafts thirty or forty feet high, crowned with curving fronds, often twenty feet long. *Ceathea dealbata* grows even to a height of fifty feet with broader fronds not so long. Their under-side is silvery, and it is said when the Maoris planned a night attack, they would lay a pathway of these ferns in the bush, to guide them to the enemy's pah—certain it is, at night a broken frond on one's track is easily visible. *Dicksonia*, slenderer than these last, and with longer fronds, grew in groups, all in their first freshness of summer—the central fronds still curved inwards like a coronet of huge, brown caterpillars. But what use to try to write of the wealth of fern-life in the forest ? It is

* *Gleichenia Cunninghamii*. † *Todea superba*.

scattered broadcast with so lavish a hand, clothing and re-clothing the living and the dead, one must wander away into the heart of this green Westland to realize it. Sometimes the path skirted deep ravines where we heard the river far below, but saw it not for the trees. Waterfalls came leaping down the mountain sides, scattering their spray over the nodding foliage. It was not altogether an easy path, and there were places where the waterfalls had eaten great holes, tumbling the stones in heaps at the bottom—where one trusted the horses to find a way through, rather than tried to guide them.

There was much red pine or rimu* in this bush, one of the most magnificent and valuable of the forest trees. High in the forks of the various pines—eighty or a hundred feet perhaps above us—hung great masses of ghee-ghee† with sword-like leaves, three or four feet long, of a light green colour. From the centre springs a silky panicle of sweet, creamy or purplish blossoms, several feet in length, not unlike that of a cabbage tree. This is followed later by beautiful sprays of berries, red, yellow, and green, intermingled. It has a curious capacity for collecting and retaining water—not needed, one might imagine, in this damp forest, but pointing to its origin in drier lands. It is an epiphytic plant, native to Australia, Tasmania, and the Pacific Islands, but six of the species are peculiar to New Zealand. And this

* *Dacrydium cupressinum*. † *Astelia Cunninghamii*.

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tropical-looking plant is a *lily*, which has adopted this method of getting the necessary amount of light and air. Plants like these, together with the lianes which closely resemble those of Chili, give that strangely tropical look to the bush, which, after all, grows in a temperate climate.

There was always that upper-world of utterly unfamiliar forms calling to one as one rode. All sorts of parasites, climbers innumerable, struggling for existence among the stately pines—sometimes one of these would be so clothed with ferns and other guests, it was impossible, at first sight, to recognize the original tree. And the pines themselves are a constant puzzle to the stranger, and one seeks in vain for the familiar forms called to mind by the name. There is the totara* with foliage of a brownish hue and stiff, pointed leaves ; from single logs of this tree the Maoris hollowed their war canoes, seventy feet in length ; and so highly prized were large trees, that they became heirlooms and even led to tribal wars. The miro† is a different looking tree altogether, with larger leaves, set in two rows on the branches ; its red fruit, as large as a small plum, is beloved of the bush-pigeons. They grow so fat and lazy on it, they will hardly fly away in the remote solitudes where they have not learnt to fear a gun. Sometimes the foliage resembles the yew as in the matai (black pine‡), or it is merely scales as in the

* *Podocarpus totara*. † *Podocarpus ferruginea*. ‡ *Podocarpus spicatus*.

kahikatea (white pine*), or as in the rimu, clothing trunk and branches alike with what are no more than light green prickles, growing round them in spirals. Only a few pines bear anything resembling a cone. In the case of the red pine its fruit is a fleshy, acorn-like cup, brilliantly red with a blue-black seed embedded in it ; in the black pine it is a small-black plum with one seed ; while the white pine carries its blue-black seed outside on the tip of a bright crimson berry. They are all very pretty, and a few are eaten by the Maoris, but they tasted too much of turpentine for our palates.

At one place the track led through what looked like a colony of giant *lycopodium*. They drooped above the ferns in weeping sprays of bronzy-green—it was like riding under a shower of golden rain—yet these were young rimus in their babyhood. In twenty years or more, the moss-like form will grow stiff and branch erect into the forest tree, though the ends of its branches always, to some extent, retain the graceful, weeping growth. Among all the baffling secrets of the forest, this utter diversity between the young and the mature form of many of its trees, is the most baffling. It is just as though some species preserved an incognito until they were old enough and strong enough to assert themselves. There is the yellow kowai† of the eastern slopes, which in spring and summer is one mass of gold—a tree sweet-pea ; it may attain even to fifty feet and more. Yet

* *P. dacrydioides*.

† *Sophora tetrapetala*.

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it begins life and lives for many years as a curious collection of right-angled twigs with a few small round leaves. These are, in the mature tree, arranged evenly, on a mid-rib several inches long, and hang gracefully from the upright branches. Everyone becomes familiar throughout the forest with straight lance-shafts* that taper to a point, clothed by leathery brown leaves, often a foot long, which hang downwards against the shaft. The leaves are so tough, they hang thus for years, being added to only from the tip of the lance, and are but half an inch wide at most, though they have been measured forty-three inches long. For twenty years it may grow thus, till it is as many feet high. Then a gradual change occurs: branches grow out from the top, the leaves become shorter and cluster at the tips, at the same time turning a glossy dark green, till the tree bears a bushy head of foliage, with compound leaves of three to five leaflets. Now begins the flowering stage—they are greenish, and remind one a little of the hemlocks. This stage may continue for years, but it is not final. Once more the leaves become simple, four to six inches in length; and from now on, the tree assumes the habit of one of the smaller forest trees, reaching as much as sixty feet in height. It is really a species of aralia. The bush gains much in beauty from the many shrubs of this family, which is largely represented. They are noticeable usually for their large foliage,

* *Pseudo-panax crassifolium.*



THE APPROACH TO THE FOX GLACIER.

so glossy and ornamental among the small-leaved pines. But one could go on for ever dwelling on the strange varieties of the bush, and its stranger affinities—it is full of anomalies and unexpectedness.

Melanesian species are largely represented, so again are Australian and Tasmanian, and many a tree and plant has its nearest relatives in South American forests, or the lonely islands of the Southern Pacific.

For a long time we had been ascending, and must have reached a height of a couple of thousand feet ; and now the view below us gradually unfolded. Hill beyond hill, the forest undulated away to the foot of stately, snow-clad mountains, whose domes and peaks glittered in the sunshine. We knew the Fox glacier came down there from the ice-fields between Mount Haidinger and the Haast Peak, with the Douglas Peak (10,107 feet) lying to the north, but we could not see it. The plain spread out below us for thirty miles, dotted with clearings—blue streams from the glacier wandering through it. There was the Cook river, which gives its name to the flat. The view was bounded far away by more tree-clad hills and unopened country, and the wide river-bed of the Karangarua lay at its further side.

It was a fertile, beautiful land, lying spread out at our feet.

Transome was a long way ahead, for I could not hurry : I wanted to *look*, and had dismounted for

the long descent to the plain. It was the hottest part of the day too, and Tom and I were leisurely coming along the narrow path when I heard a delightful whistling. I was quite prepared to welcome any new and beautiful sight or sound, and looked all round for the bird. Still the whistling came nearer, and turning, I saw behind me a young man in shirt-sleeves and bare legs, wheeling a bicycle. I was so astonished at the sight, I stared in amazement, and drew Tom in close to the bank to let him pass. But my whistling bird stopped, and greeting me in friendly fashion, announced he had something for me. He drew out a little packet from his breast, saying I had left it behind at the Waitaha, and he had been on our tracks ever since—I was glad to find *not* specially to restore my property ! I asked him what he was doing with a bicycle in such a country, and how he got through the rivers. He laughed, and said he carried it on his shoulders, or a friend might lend him a horse when the fords were deep. “ It’s a sight quicker than walking, and there’s a wonderful lot of the track you can ride.”

Then he disappeared down among the trees. I followed and found Transome near a very rough torrent-bed, where the water plunged across the way in noisy cataracts. My “ bird ” had just got over safely, with his bicycle held aloft—and we both agreed we preferred a horse.

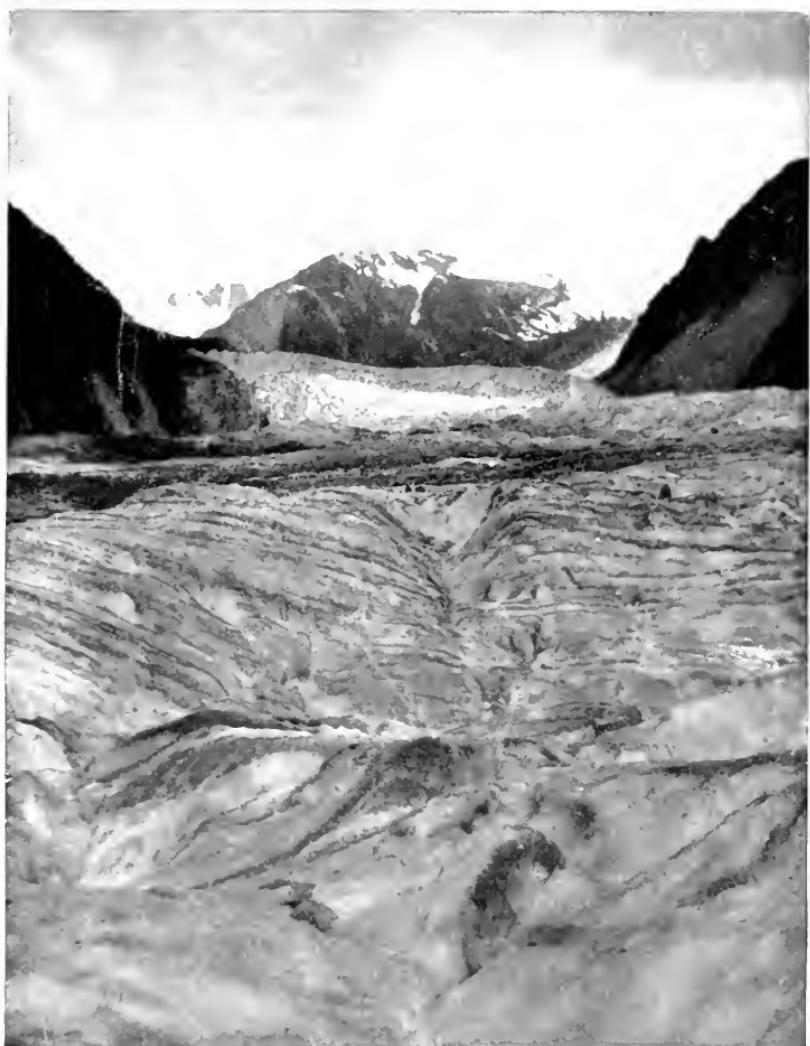
Presently a road took the place of the track, and led us out on to the plain, and up to the

Williams's pleasant farmstead. Beautiful grass-lands cleared of bush, and tenanted by sleek Herefords ; enclosures with gates, and fine horses knee-deep in lush grass, gave an air of prosperity. Yet, sixteen years before, this was virgin forest. There were seventy calves in a big paddock near the house—for this was, perhaps, the best cattle-farm on the Coast. The owner came to meet us, and he and his wife gave us the usual hearty welcome, and the children soon made friends. There being seven, a beneficent Government regards them as a school and allows a teacher, and a wooden shed erected in the yard represented the school-buildings. However, it was holiday time just then. My hostess was kindness itself. She often made me laugh, telling me of the shifts she was put to in this outlying corner. Some time back she had sent to Hokitika for a new outfit of glass and china. Two pack-horses carried the crates by the very road we had come, and all went well apparently till close to home, when the horses crowded each other in their haste—the packs collided, and to the dismay of the waiting mistress, when the crates were opened her wares “All ran out on the ground like water,” as she described it, and since then there had been no opportunity to get more.

That same afternoon my whistling gentleman offered to conduct us to the glacier. He armed himself with a hatchet, borrowed a horse, and we set out.

Some six miles off was a hut where we left the horses. We warned him of the Scorpion's straying propensities, as he fixed up some very shaky slip-rails, but he assured us his horse would stand all day, and one would not stray without the others, so we left them. We soon found he knew no more than we did about the glacier, and we got into some strange places, and I was hauled up, and let down, and helped over many difficulties, amid much laughing. However, we did at length get on to the main body of the ice, and continued till we could see the Victoria on the left, only separated by a black wall of rock (behind which it has shrunk) and the Fox branching to the right. The whole surface hereabouts was much easier than the Franz Josef, and we did not need the hatchet at all. As at the Waiho, the gorge is filled by the ice, and the mountains are clothed with vegetation to the snow-line. I think its surroundings are grander than the Franz Josef: the mountains run up in jagged peaks and domes of snow, and one gets a better view of them from below, not being so closed-in by the mountain walls of the gorge.

The stillness up there was absolute: the ice made no strange rumblings, the river at its foot scarcely sounded, and only the singing or whistling of the birds broke the intense silence. Below us was a chain of blue lakelets or pools, and on the way back the men stayed behind to bathe, and I found my way down to the hut. It seemed odd



ICE FORMATION ON THE FOX GLACIER

not to see or hear the horses ; I could see the pile of saddles, and the bridles hanging near the door, but not a horse was in sight. I hurried round the hut, the slip-rails were down, and the horses gone ! Going some way down the track I caught a glimpse of them through the trees, but too far off for me to do anything ; and I was hot and tired, and a six mile walk just then had no attractions—neither had chasing a wilful Scorpion through the bush ; so I sat down and waited. When the men came, our friend declared his horse never had done such a thing before. They made a circuit, and cut them off where the stream and the path ran between the sides of a kind of cutting ; and presently, these excursions and alarms being passed, we rode back to supper. We spent another very delightful day resting here. Thunderstorms were rolling about among the hills, and bringing down torrential showers ; after which the sun would burst forth again, and all the world sparkle and shine, and the rivers and streams sing for joy. When we made a start the following morning, there was a great deal of laughing and many prophecies as to my fate.

“ You’re not the first lady has gone south,” they said, “ but they none of them get further than the Karangarua ; *you’ll* never get through ! We’ll see you back before the week’s out ! ” But I waved them a gay farewell : “ I’m going to the Haast whatever befall, and you won’t see me back this year ; but I’ll come and see you again.” And so we rode out over Cook’s Flat to the Karangarua river.

Here there is an accommodation-house, and we stayed for lunch, and then some of the men convoyed us across the stony desert of the Karangarua. It is two or three miles across, one of the worst rivers when it is in flood, but that day we rode safely through its many streams. We could see the purple mouth of the gorge whence it issued, and the men told us there are several boiling springs up it, rarely seen by any but the Coasters. The high mountains were cloaked in mist ; gorges and foot-hills were cut off by a level band of cloud ; nothing to be seen but grey stones near hand, and distant purplish forest afar, under the soft, billowy mist. Later it cleared, and about five o'clock we were riding down to a lovely still ford, lying blue and fair in the sunshine. Long reaches of quiet water stretched under over-hanging trees, leading the eye up to distant blue mountains, across which lay the last wreaths of silvery cloud. Beyond the ford the land was cleared, and a few small settlements were dotted about. Truly a peaceful, lovely spot. I believe that it is the only quiet ford in South Westland—and we splashed through carelessly ; and as I rode up to a wide, low house, I wondered why on earth we had arranged to go nine miles farther, when here was such a haven for the weary !

The horses were led away, and I was taken into a charming bedroom hung with white, all spotless and inviting ; from this to a cheery parlour, where gay flowers bloomed in the window, and a tea-tray



OUR CONVOY OVER THE KARANGARUA.

was temptingly spread for the travellers. Never in the many teas I have enjoyed have I tasted one like that ! Home-made buns and bread and butter, and delicious cream—why should we wander farther ? But Transome's plans, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, altered not, and he was soon urging me not to linger, as the worst part of the day's journey was before us. I think our kind hosts were as disappointed as I was, for I found I was really the first lady tourist to reach this point, and therefore, an object of interest. The Maori ladies of a small pah here, it seemed, wanted to see me, and I had to wait a little till they had donned their best ; and when they appeared they had put on everything they possessed : hats with feathers and flowers, furs and coats—in spite of the extreme warmth of the weather. I received them sitting on my horse outside the verandah. They shook hands with gentle dignity, and in their soft voices said they hoped I liked their country. I assured them I was charmed, and they beamed all over their fat, smiling faces, for the ladies were very stout. Transome meantime had been enquiring after a hat—even an old one at this stage he would have taken gladly—but as one man remarked : “ How could they keep hats when every man had a different head ; there would be nothing else in a store ! ” He had, however, got directions for our further guidance ; the Main South Road ceases some way beyond the settlement—Jacob's river, as it is called—and takes to the beach for five or six

miles ; then up a river-bed, where we were to find the next accommodation-house. Mr. Ritchie, our host, was North-of-Ireland, and we had much laughing over the term "far-downers," which we frequently heard applied to men from there. His only explanation was that perhaps they went further than anybody else ! At last the good-byes were said, the Maori ladies waved graceful farewells, and we rode away as the last wreaths of mist melted off the mountains, and the sunset clouds above began to turn to rose and gold.

A very rough bit of road led us on to the beach, where the big white and green rollers were thundering on the strand. Low sand dunes bounded the bush, which, along the coast, was cut off straight and even as by gigantic shears, and all the trees branched away from the prevailing west wind. Here and there a splash of scarlet enlivened this 40-foot hedge, and immediately within its sheltering band the forest-luxuriance rioted unchecked. Far away in a golden haze a wooded headland ran out to sea with a rocky islet at its point, and we could see from the long roll and break of the waves there must be a sand bar—no doubt at the mouth of the Mahitahi. Late as it was, with the low sun slanting in our faces, that was a very hot stretch of beach to cross, and we watched anxiously for stick or post to indicate a turn-off into the bush. But there was neither post nor sign—not even a rag tied to a stick to guide us—to such meagreness was the great South Road reduced !



JACOB'S RIVER:
THE ONLY QUIET FORD IN SOUTH WESTLAND

(70)

When we came to a lagoon, the western sky was golden, and the dark headland beyond was reflected in the still water: everything was wrapped in a mellow haze of light. The spell of absolute loneliness and silence lay over all things. But where was the path? We turned the horses up the river-bed, crossing and re-crossing many streams, anxiously scanning some old hoof-marks, but as often as not finding they were but tracks of the half-wild cattle of the settlers. No one in sight, no sign of habitation—and the sun sank, and it became harder and harder to trace the will-o'-the-wisp hoof-marks. Now the river-bed widened out into a flat—partly shingle, partly overgrown with scrub—more puzzling than ever. Could we have passed our accommodation-house already, and were we riding up into the uninhabited mountains? And thus, lost and hungry, alone and tired, that sudden-falling southern dusk came on us. Still we must push on—we could not stay all night in a river bed if any other were within reach! Suddenly Tom turned round, and stopped with pricked ears, listening. The beat of hoofs on stones was distinctly audible, and out of the dusk behind us came two galloping figures.

We waited till they came up to us—clattering the stones to right and left in their wild career. They drew rein with friendly greetings, telling us they had been to meet us by a new track, cut lately through the bush, and finding we had passed it unseen, had galloped to the river-bed to

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find us. It was a great relief to be thus taken in charge, and extricated from the river-bed ! They led us through many ups and downs of rough ground on the edge of the bush to the homestead, where, they assured us, we had been expected all the evening, and here we were met with right hearty greeting by Mr. Condon.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLUE RIVER HUT AND THE CROSSING OF THE HAAST.

Before us stretched the pine-trees' sombre miles,
Soft lay the moss, like furs upon the floor ;
Behind, the woodland's green monotonous aisles,
Closed far away by sunset's amber door.

League after league the same. The sky grew red,
And through the trees appeared a snowy gleam
Of lonely peak and spectral mountain head,
And gulf's that nurse the glacier and the stream.

ANNE GLENNY WILSON.

AFTER all our straying it was very pleasant to be guided in safety to a night's resting-place. Candles and lanterns flitted out of the house, held by dark figures, and kind Irish voices bade us welcome, and lamented over me: "Sure you must be tired out; we've been looking for you all the afternoon; however did ye miss the track?" I was led in and divested of hat and knapsack, and we were soon sitting down to a hot tea-supper. Everyone wanted to talk, and we could hardly get on with our eating. At last the mother ordered silence: "Let them alone, can't you—till they've done, and then we'll talk." I really was a novelty down there—the first lady traveller—and they could not do enough for me; I hope they knew I was grateful.

When morning came we found we were in a valley, among the usual high-forest-covered hills,

with deep, purple gorges, and higher mountains beyond. Along the river were paddocks and grazing land, but behind the house the bush came to the very doors. The heat seemed tropical in that closed-in valley ; everything was saturated with moisture and the mist hung low on the hills. So far we had scarcely been troubled by mosquitoes, but now we were in a country infested by them. Much discussion took place as to our next stage, and they strongly advised resting the horses a day, and then pushing through the next fifty miles in one stage. The alternative was a night spent in a hut *en route*, whither we would carry some provisions with us.

“ You won’t sleep much in the Blue River Hut,” they laughed. “ Don’t you think of such a thing ! ”

“ Why, the mosquitoes could lift ye up and carry ye away ! ” “ They just swarm ”—and so forth. But we were bent on going on, if possible. While the discussion was in progress heavy rain fell, and we decided to push on, for this hot and close valley was terribly enervating. One of the daughters offered to ride with us for the first nine miles and see us over the Paringa river, and the whole family gathered to watch the start.

“ You’re just a little bit of all-right,” said my hostess, hugely delighted with a waterproof cover I drew over my hat. “ We live in the wet here all the year round, and we none of us has inventions like that ! ” “ Mind,” said our host, “ and don’t be for going to cross the Haast the two of ye ; it’s

a bad river is the Haast, and it'll sweep ye away." We promised caution, and set forth. We crossed the flat and entered a narrow path where high grasses brushed our knees as we rode past, and every few yards streams ran across it in inverted culverts of punga logs. Now our companion's horse was used to these novel kind of drains and took them in his canter, while ours pulled up at every one they came to, slipping about on the rounded logs, so that we soon were left far behind. However, we got out of this into open country, more like a moor than anything we had seen. The mountains falling back into the distance seemed much lower. The Paringa river was easily crossed, the water but reaching to the saddle-flaps ; then on we went across a wilderness of tall flax and scrub, where a bittern rose and flapped away down stream. This bird will stand for hours, his long bill pointed heavenwards, quite invisible among withered grass and reeds—his fawn plumage and darker markings blend so perfectly with his surroundings, that if he did not rise one would never see him. Here was a little house where dwelt two old brothers, who carried the fortnightly mail on pack-horses to the Haast. One of them was very ill, and I went with our guide to visit him—she had brought him a big bottle of milk and some other things. We found him sitting in the house they built themselves years ago, when they came from County Waterford, and we were soon deep in talk of the Old country,

He had no hope of getting any better, and soon after we heard he was dead. It was a lonely spot, and when the other brother was away with the mails there was no one but his friends at the Mahitahi, nine miles off, to hear whether he was alive or dead. We parted here with Miss Condon, the last link between us and the settlements behind, and striking across a green, swampy meadow, plunged once more into the bush for eight dismal miles. The track, winding ever upwards through dripping trees that towered black above our heads, seemed as if it would go on thus for ever. Range beyond range the forest-clad hills stretched away interminably. All seemed impenetrable—monotonous—divided by tumbling torrents in deep bottoms—heard but unseen. It was weird enough riding through the white wrappings of the mist, in an atmosphere heated like a fernery at Kew ; but when the wan daylight died, and the narrow track grew inky black, and we had to trust the instinct of the horses to find it, then indeed it became awesome. And as we wandered on, no hut or any land-mark was there. I felt we might be lost, and wander thus for ever in these dim shades.

Anxiously we questioned, could we possibly have passed the hut ? But no, our directions were plain enough : “to look for a ford above where a suspension-bridge for foot-passengers was thrown across the ravine.” I began to wish we had stayed at the Mahitahi, and wondered,



THE TRACK, WINDING EVER UPWARDS
THROUGH DRIPPING TREES."

could we and the horses go on thus till morning. As these cheerful reflections pressed themselves upon me, we suddenly came to a break in the trees, and some wires across the sky arrested our attention. Surely it was the suspension bridge—the ford could only be a little further on—if we could but find it. The Blue River was tumbling in a fine cascade below the bridge (we guessed from the sound), and the horses found the ford and went in quite willingly. Now, it is not every night one rides into a strange river in the dark, quite ignorant as to where to get out, and not knowing if one's horse is going to swim ; so that it was a relief to me when we were safely over. The trees had been felled on a little rise above the landing-place, and we could just make out a square outline with another beyond—the hut and stable. I have no doubt on a fine evening this forest-pool, with trees and ferns reflected in the still water, may have been an enchanting spot. But that night it was dark ; it was wet ; we were both tired and hungry and longing for a decent resting-place, and when we pushed open the door of that hut what did we find ? It was nothing but a corrugated-iron box, eight or nine feet square, with a rude bunk, covered with fern, at either side ; between them was a dirty cupboard smeared with candle grease, which served as a table ; a stool by the wide hearth and two old billies completed the furniture. An axe-head lay near, but the handle had been burnt for fire-wood, and the floor was

littered with dirty paper, old tins, sticks, and ferns. A more truly uninviting place would be hard to find ; and all the time a booming, like a swarm of bees round our heads, warned us that though we might find a resting-place, we should not find rest. The mosquitoes, fasting no doubt, for many days, came at us like an army—never have I seen anything like them. It was maddening—not to be borne ! The first thing would be to clear them out. Alas ! it was little we knew of these wily foes. I collected all the rubbish off the floor while Transome attended to the horses, and hunted about for some wood dry enough to burn. Then we got a fire alight and set out our provisions. We had tea, eggs, and bread and butter in one of the bags, and as soon as there were some charcoal embers we piled them on an old shovel, and threw our sugar supply on to it. It certainly made a terrific smoke, but it only drove the wretched pests up into the roof, to descend again as soon as the air cleared. Then we lighted Himrod's Powder and ate our supper in an atmosphere so thick, we could only just see each other by the light of our candles. Never was such a desperately uncomfortable night ! We tried to read—quite useless ; exclamations and slaps and flappings disturbed our endeavours, and we finally wrapped our heads in veils and old newspapers and tired to sleep. It was hopeless. Ping, ping at our ears was sure to wake us up just as we were dropping off, and

when at last I fell into a troubled doze, it was with my head wrapped in one of the pack-covers. Over the rest of that night of misery I draw a veil. Transome smoked many pipes, I believe. And when the grey dawn stole in at the one small window, we looked at each other. I was much the worst, quite unrecognizable and could hardly see, but though Transome's hands were swollen they had spared his face. How I wished I could have smoked all night! Hurriedly I collected the charred embers together, and made some cocoa. "Let us flee," I said, "while there is any of us left." Transome vowed he would report the state of this "Traveller's Rest" at head-quarters on our return; but, after all, no one, except it may be an odd cattle-drover, ever sleeps there—the settlers know it too well.

We set out into a world which was still wrapped in that weird white mist. Only a few yards of track were visible ahead—always ascending through the trees. But we were gradually getting to the top of a 2,000 foot saddle—it grew brighter every minute, and as we left the night clouds below, we knew that up among the peaks there would be a cloudless sunrise:

"Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire."

And as the soft air fanned the clouds apart, and the sun conquered the mist, blue sky spread above us, and warm beams shot through the trees, waking the forest to a new day. It grew more beautiful as we went on. Sometimes the rocks were of mica, which shelled off in flakes, and then it was like riding down a shining pathway of silver, under trees and ferns all hung with diamonds. The forest parrots resented our intrusion into their solitude, and swooped about our heads with harsh cries. These birds, the ka-kas are slenderer in build and have smaller beaks than their relative, the sheep-killing kea of the eastern slopes. Their brownish-olive and red plumage is so dark it seems black among the trees. The tuis were going mad with delight ; cheerful birds, dressed in sober black, with two white feathers at the throat, earning them the name of the "parson-bird." They whistle two or three notes out of the fulness of joy, and break off to chuckle in the middle. I always wished they would finish a song whose first notes are so delicious, but they never do.

Gradually the fresh, cold air up here waked up our energies, and I began to forget the tired feeling induced by trying to sleep in one's boots and gaiters in "Mosquito Hut." When Transome teased me by reviling the forest for its lack of human interest, enough spirit returned to contradict ; but, in very truth, that is just what

strikes one so forcibly. League after league, range beyond range—

“ A land where no man comes nor hath come
Since the making of the world.”

Not even natives inhabited these solitudes in the past, nor any four-footed beast—nothing but the birds. The Maori invaders from the north, who came for the precious greenstone to be found in the river-beds, made no settlements among the hills, and left but a few small ones along the coast. Perhaps it is the only country in the world without history. Even the heart of Africa or Greenland has its traditions and folk-lore—here it is writ only in the rocks and immemorial trees. Its lords were the spirits of mountain and river—their Temple the house of the Forest.

To-day a new order slowly creeps in ; bit by bit the forest will be conquered ; bit by bit the Temple must be despoiled. The columns in that Temple seem up to now almost to defy the hand of time. There is the matai or black pine, whose growth is so slow that it may almost rank with the giant kauri of the North Island, which takes a thousand years to come to maturity. Living or dead it is well-nigh indestructible. Buchanan, the botanist, tells of a black pine found lying in the bush, over which three broad-leaf* trees had grown, enfolding it in their roots. He calculated these trees to be 300 years old—yet the matai was perfectly sound and was split up for fencing

* *Griselinia littoralis*.

posts. The black pine is another illustration of that curious difference between the old and the young in the same tree. It first appears with two cotyledons, as in any broad-leaved tree, and grows up with a drooping, almost weeping, habit. At this stage it bears scattered leaves of a coppery tint, and was for long regarded as a distinct species, till trees showing both stages of development in the same specimen were found. In sixteen to twenty years the branches begin to grow upright and "spiky," and become covered with dark-green, very narrow leaves. And, lastly, we get a spreading forest tree equalling the red pine in height. At certain times of the year the bark peels off, and then the Temple columns are splashed with crimson and scarlet—wonderfully beautiful.

Surely it is this continual finding of surprises that make one's progress through the bush so fascinating ? Everywhere one sees those strange black ropes, jointed and polished, hanging from the roof in straight lines, or tying tree to tree, twisting and coiling, with neither beginning nor end that one can find. They render the bush impenetrable and even with a sharp knife it is hard work to cut one through. Yet that snakey rope is a lily—the "supple-jack"** of the settlers. Looking more carefully, one discovers dark-green foliage, with a metallic lustre on the leaves; tendrils that curl and wave through the air, seeking

* *Ripogonum scandens*.

new supports, and the most unlily-like spray of greenish flowers. These are succeeded by oval, pointed berries of a brilliant scarlet—making up for the inconspicuousness of its blossom. The most reviled, and at the same time one of the most beautiful, of the climbers is the “bush lawyer.”* It is armed, on stalks and leaves alike, with barbed hooks, by which it climbs, clutching everything within reach and forming dense jungles. Hooked to one’s clothes it rends them to pieces, for it is almost impossible to extricate anything that gets into its clutches. The Maori name “Tataramoa,” means a “heap of prickles.” The beauty of its light-green leaves and sprays of yellowish flowers, makes one almost forgive the barb-like spines—as long, that is, as they are not imbedded like fish-hooks in one’s person. Later on it will hang out clusters of red and yellow fruit like minute raspberries, but of small value to the hungry wayfarer. There are four well-known species which climb to the very tops of the trees, but *Rubus parvus* is found only in South Westland at the head-waters of some of the rivers. It is one of the few New Zealand plants which puts on autumn tints, and is a beautiful object when its leaves turn to bronze and gold. Another tree which sheds its leaves is the ribbon-wood.† Once the track led us under a grove of these trees—a very fairy-land of beauty as the sunshine glinted

* *Rubus australis.* † *Gaya Lyallii.*

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through the light-green leaves on the pendant bunches of fragile blossom, like cherry.

At times our road grew very dangerous ; the usual waterfalls and streamlets poured across it, but frequent landslips had occurred, and at last we got to a place where the mountain had slipped down bodily. It was called the Blue Slips, and here I very nearly came to an end of the tour. The little track, not two feet wide, wavered like a scratch across the face—in and out, appearing round great buttresses, to be lost sight of again as it crept inwards skirting deep furrows worn by the torrents. Bluish-grey mud and rocks had in places overwhelmed trees still rooted, leaving only their tops sticking out of the *débris*. Far, far down, a river was roaring white at the bottom of the ravine. What followed happened so suddenly and unexpectedly, I was taken completely off my guard. Whether the screaming ka-kas frightened him, or whether I touched him with the spur, I can't say : Tom bolted—here, where there was not an inch of room to spare—where that narrow scratch bent in and out at such sharp angles. I felt every moment I must be flung off at a tangent. I remember on the outward curve, as we swung madly round it, seeing the river below what looked like a grey fall of lava, but in a flash we were charging apparently into a blind gully ; it seemed an eternity, and why we did not both shoot over the edge, off the track, and roll to the bottom, I know not. There was a terrible

curve in front I felt sure would be our last. I still pulled with all my strength, but a snaffle-bit with single ring is of little use on a bolting horse. To my intense relief he slowed down before we reached that buttress. I waited for Transome, somewhat shaken, with a feeling that the sooner we got out of this the better. There was just room for him to pass me, and he took the lead, and we started the long descent very soberly.

We began to catch glimpses now of a vast tree-grown plain with high hills round it, forming a wide amphitheatre. Far away a faint-blue melting into the whitish sky showed where the sea lay. It looked a fair and beautiful land. And now the hills changed character: the forest ended on their lower slopes; bare rumpled outlines, clothed with yellow grass, took the place of the tangle of the bush. Blazing sunshine here reigned supreme, the trees no longer dripped with moisture, and the ground was dry. It was two o'clock, and for two hours we rode across the flat, sometimes crossing gentle streams, where plenty of soft green grass grew under the shade of spreading trees. Fat red cattle raised curious eyes, and gazed enquiringly as we cantered past. But no sign of farm or dwelling was there in all that wide land of plenty. And then quite suddenly we had left it all. This beautiful land of shade and sunshine and rippling water gave place to a vast flax swamp, waving before us for miles. Here and there ragged pines secured a foot-hold on some knoll, and manuka and

“ wild Irishman ”* (that very objectionable thorny scrub) caught at us with leafless branches as we passed. Brown water lay between, whose peaty depth it was impossible to guess. And as to the Main South Road, it meandered in and out of bog-holes, marked very rarely by a bit of rag tied to a flax blade—flax so tall that even on horseback it grew high over our heads. Once, a few stones had been thrown down ; then a brown water stretched right across the only opening. In went the Scorpion, very cautiously. It swallowed her, and I watched her swim across, wondering if Tom would do the same. He chose his own crossing and walked through on a firm bottom. This peril past, through more flax and scrub we came to a strange place. A rude foot-bridge was thrown across another sheet of coffee-coloured water, and beyond that there was a tangle of dead trees lying partly submerged, heaped in confusion. Could horses get through that ? Surely we had missed the track ? But no, there was the evidence of that tree-trunk bridging the water—there was no other path. The Scorpion, in her matter-of-fact-way, crashed through, breast-deep in the coffee-coloured water, and Tom followed, and than at the critical point took a panic. I could feel him poised with all four feet gathered on a log. He utterly refused to climb trees, whatever else he might do for me. But we could not stay there—with a slide and a flop he splashed in among the submerged branches, and we got across.

* *Discaria toumatou.*

We found ourselves on the sandy shores of a little lagoon, whose blue waters lay in a setting of bright green reeds. Black swan and duck were on its placid surface, a little patch of beauty and peace. Just outside the Pacific thundered, and when we climbed the sand bank we stood above the great white curlers, and along their edge black-backed gulls as large as geese were digging out shellfish, and fighting and screaming over every morsel. They took no notice of us at all—war, and tumult of waves outside; utter peace and stillness within. Then we turned to look down that lonely shore. Far as the eye could see it was lined with the white skeletons of forest trees, bleached by sun and wind—packed in an impenetrable *chevaux de frise* imbedded in the sand. Here and there a black one or a mass of seaweed deceived us with its resemblance to a man on horseback, and for long we watched one, as we thought, riding towards us. Over all, the heat-haze shimmered and danced. The distance between us and a far-away blue headland seemed illimitable. Swamp on our left, the thundering Pacific on our right; between, that stretch of shifting sand. How had the Main South Road fallen from its high estate! It was slow going in the loose sand. The afternoon sun beat fiercely in our faces, and those phantom riders ahead caused us many disappointments. We tried riding among the sand dunes, and after a time we struck a long green alley sheltered by a growth of creepers and stunted

trees from the fierce glare. Here we could canter. We knew we must be nearing the Haast, though the river was hidden as yet. The swamps had given place to good land, bush-covered, but with open grassy spaces, and through this, about half past five, we came to the great river. The wide bed stretched a couple of miles perhaps in front of us, divided into long shingle islands by blue, hurrying streams. The farther shore was misty blue in the heat ; purple tree-clad hills, surmounted by bare, rocky mountains, made a fitting gateway whence the river issued, and at its mouth lay a lagoon some miles in extent. Where the river finally reaches the sea there is a sand bar, utterly ruining what might otherwise be a harbour. When we saw these streams that swirled silently seawards in their irresistible might, we understood the cause of those miles of bleaching trees we had ridden along. In the wild storms and floods they are swept out to sea, only to be hurled back by the Pacific, tossed backwards and forwards in the broken water that extends for a league or more at the Haast mouth, and gradually piled along the beach by the tides. Beyond the first stream we could see a kind of beacon erected on a desert island of stones and shingle, and we splashed through easily enough, hoping against hope to find a telephone or bell, or some means of communication with the farther shore. There was only a broken wire. We took out the field-glasses and scanned the belt of flax and broken ground, where

we could see a few signs of habitation. I tried hard to persuade Transome that I saw a woman waving to us. "Here," he said, "take the glasses, I told you there was no one there," and when I looked it was an old white horse waving its tail. We rode on, and came to the next stream, but it was altogether too wide and deep for any horse, and we turned up towards the hills thinking possibly it branched again. We remembered our host at the Mahitahi and his warning, "It'll sweep ye away"; and a hungry, treacherous river it looked. We rode with handkerchiefs tied to sticks fluttering overhead, but, apparently, there was no one to see us. The heat was grilling, wafts of hot air off the stones smote our faces, and I longed inexpressibly to be out of the saddle. Also, except for a little cocoa and a crust of bread at eleven o'clock, we had had nothing whatever to eat.

About a mile up, the stream branched into three. The first we forded without difficulty, the next was deep and swift; five times the Scorpion refused it, and finally her master brought her out, and we rode back along its edge, anxiously looking for some means to get over. We arrived at a place where the two streams became one; the ruffle on the water going over some imbedded drift wood, showed there was bottom for at least some way across. Here the Scorpion was made to understand she had got to go over, for her master had made up his mind. I sat on Tom, and we both watched—he apparently as anxious for

his companion's safety as I was for mine. Very cautiously she entered the water, and for a third of the way over she was still in her depth. Then the fierce current seized her, the light blue water swept horse and rider away, lifting him from the saddle as if he were but a feather. She gave one mad upward plunge, beating the air with her forefeet, and sank. I held my breath, it had all happened so suddenly—but yes, there were still two heads, and a panama on one of them ! Transome had caught the stirrup, how I don't know in that swift rush of water—laden as he was with camera, knapsack and field-glasses. They were going down stream at a terrific pace, but the mare was striking for the farther shore. She made for a backwater behind a curve of the bank, and as soon as she touched bottom stopped, waiting for her master to mount. He, poor man, was still up to the chin in water ! He made her move on, and I saw him mount. He shouted and gesticulated to me—no doubt telling me not to cross. Then galloped away.

He was too far off for me to hear what he had said, and anyway, I had no desire to try. The feeling of intense thankfulness and excitement suddenly gave way ; I felt limp and weary, and inclined to cry—to cry in the midst of so much water ! It was so hot too, and I had eaten nothing since eleven o'clock. I was all alone in that desolate shingle island, with the rays of the level sun burning on my face . . . soon it

would sink, and I should be in the dark and supposing a snow-flood came down what then ? Patient Tom stood stock-still watching where his comrade had disappeared ; did he think she was drowned, or could he see the farther shore ? Gladly I would have got off, and sat in that one tiny patch of shadow cast by his body, but there was no stone or trunk to mount from, and he was a tall horse—gymnastics were beyond me just then. The evening wore on. Bit by bit the scene I had just witnessed passed before me—over and over again in my tired head. Well, it had ended well. The Haast had tried to do its worst, but it had failed. Was nobody ever coming ? I bowed my head till it was nearly on Tom's neck, though I still, from time to time, waved my flag of distress. Hours seemed to pass. Then a long way off, near the lagoon, I saw a man. He was in his shirt sleeves, and was coming along in leisurely fashion ; but he was on the opposite bank of the arm which we had crossed together. I turned Tom and rode back towards him. Then he stopped coming on, and waited. This I took to be a signal to cross, and without going so far as our original ford, I just put Tom in where we were. In less than a minute he was swimming ! The water came up about my waist, but we got across easily till we reached the other side. Here the bank shelved, and I did not see how we were going to climb out. But, with a mighty effort,

Tom broke it down with his fore-feet and heaved himself up, still with me on his back. And the young man remarked laconically he “ didn’t know there was a deep hole there ! ”

He led me a long way down, answering my questions about the river ; but he was a man of action rather than words, and quite suddenly he reached up, and lifting me out of the saddle, set me on my feet. I gasped, but by this time I was so tired the effort to dismount would have been the last straw, and I was grateful. His boat was tied to a stone. The wide lagoon lay in front of us ; with quick, gentle hands he took off the saddle, put it in the boat beside me, and telling me to hold the bridle shoved off. Tom followed with a little coaxing, his eyes fixed on the stern of the boat, and when his hoofs touched bottom again the look of relief in his face was human. Then my ferryman mounted his mare (which was tied near by) and rode with me to show me his brother’s house, where we were to stay. A little way on we came up to Transome in *déshabillé*—all his possessions hanging on someone’s clothes line. He was peacefully smoking, and the panama still triumphantly on his head—why it survived when a really useful hat would have been lost, I can’t say. He assured me he was perfectly all right—a little tired, but refreshed by the swim, and his sole anxiety all along had been for the camera films—the precious records of our trip.



Photograph by

LOOKING TOWARDS THE MOUTH OF THE HAAST. [C. A. Tomlinson 192

THE CROSSING OF THE HAAST. 93

Fortunately we had posted most of them back from the Mahitahi.

And this is the true version of the crossing of the Haast. The other, told to us on our return, was a fiction.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAAST PASS.

Gone are the forest tracks, where oft we rode
Under the silver fern fronds climbing slow,
In cool, green tunnels, though fierce noontide glowed
And glittered on the tree-tops far below.
There, 'mid the stillness of the mountain road,
We just could hear the valley river flow,
Whose voice through many a windless summer day
Haunted the silent woods, now passed away.

W. P. REEVES.

My ferryman rode with me half a mile along a bit of newly-made road. He stopped in front of a house with wide verandah ; a path led up to the door between gooseberry bushes and rambler roses, and immediately across the road the bush closed in once more, but for several acres round the house it had been burnt, and rich green grass grew between the blackened stumps. Here and there a giant totara or a rimu that had survived the fire, threw a pleasant shade for the cows and the many calves that strayed about. The house itself was scarcely finished, just a farm in the making, wrenched from what had been a few years back, dense bush. At the gate my guide, as a matter of course, lifted me off my horse ; his brother Mr. Cron came to meet me from the house, while his wife stood smiling a welcome from the verandah. Introductions don't take long on the Coast, but they were exceedingly

interested to know *how* we had got over the Haast—and then I was led into a fresh sweet room, all hung with white. In a few minutes my hostess returned with a dainty tray, some strips of toast, and a welcome cup of tea. I remember the impression the d'oyly on the tray made on me, and that cup of tea was just what I was longing for. Then she brought me hot water and some thick cream (which she said would cure my mosquito bites), and left me to get into dry garments. I was surprised to find my pack was dry, though it had been under water. It was very late when we finally sat down to supper—a supper to be remembered ! There was roast goose, beautiful bread and butter, cream and cakes—and I really think that for once our appetites did not disappoint our hostess ! And when I laid me down that night in the cool clean sheets, with a mosquito-net arranged over my head, I felt it was worth all we had been through in the hut and on the road, and better than resting “weary limbs at length on beds of asphodel.”

Next day I spent with my hostess. There were some necessary washing and repairs to be done for both of us, and Transome was busy putting the camera to rights (which he did not succeed in doing) and exploring along the Haast.

My hostess was a marvel to me. She was the only woman in the settlement, and besides her husband she had several men to “do” for.

Everything was orderly. Cows milked, pigs and calves and chickens fed ; the children attended to and taught, and brought up to take care of each other and themselves. Even the baby of two years old sat up at table and fed itself solemnly. Busy from morning till night, yet never hurried ; and her low rippling laugh broke out unexpectedly over the least thing. Her big husband could scarcely bear her out of his sight, and appealed to her over everything. All her life she had lived far down the Coast (she had been born only eight miles off)—she had never travelled anywhere ; and many a chat we had.

It was a delightful place to stay at. Just enough sea in the air to make it invigorating ; and a sense of remoteness, as of a world apart, filled one with a great peace, and forgetfulness of the minor worries of this life.

I was bent on going farther—there were those olivine rocks and Cascade Point, and even remoter solitudes farther south ; but Transome had been making enquiries : there were seventy or eighty miles between us and the farthest possible point ; time would not admit of it, and he promised he would bring me back another year. So I had to content myself with one more stage of the Main South Road before we turned our faces homewards across the pass.

There was a breezy joyousness in the air as we set out for Okuru next day—even the horses seemed to feel it. We rode, first through the

cleared land, then through swamp and sand dunes to the shore, and the tide being high our progress was but slow in the soft sand. At high tide there is a long string of pools, into which the big combers rush with terrifying force ; they kept poor Tom in a desperate state of nervousness as we splashed through. I was glad when a post directed us to a lovely woodland way, under high spreading trees and welcome shade. It was really a "made" bit of road, and we cantered off gaily, glad to be off the shingle of the beach. Quite suddenly we came on a deep, blue river, whose waters were backed up by the high tide—we could see the waves breaking in sheets of foam over the bar at its mouth. It was a lovely scene, this lonely blue water, as it curled and rippled under the trees and varied growth of the banks ; but we could see no further road, nor ford, nor post to mark one. Reluctantly we retraced our steps back to the beach, and rode on until we came to a shed ; and in the shed, oh ! surprising Okuru, a telephone. Of late these useful inventions for summoning help to cross the rivers had usually been defunct, so it was with doubtful eagerness we rang. We waited five minutes—ten—another ring and this time an answering one came, and we went down through sand hills to a landing-stage. There, across the lagoon, lay the little settlement, shut in by bush and backed by purple mountains. A river empties itself into the lagoon at either end, and Okuru lies between them. I cannot describe

the peaceful loveliness of that spot. The water lay calm and blue at our feet, with the forest, the tree-ferns, and wooden buildings on the farther shore mirrored in it. A jetty, built on black piles, ran out into the water, and one or two boats were drawn upon the clean yellow sand. Some children were playing in the ripples at the edge, and a boat was just putting off from the landing-stage. It seemed the embodiment of peace. Years ago this place was surveyed, and a town mapped out ; but it came to nothing, and the clearings have mostly gone back into bush, and only a few houses remain. Yet it is one of the few harbours a small steamer can enter on the Coast. Well, one day that little railway will come even to Okuru, and it will grow fast enough then !

We watched the boat slipping silently across, sending long lines of ripples wavering over the glassy surface. As it neared we saw it contained a passenger, who stepped ashore, and introduced himself as the schoolmaster. His coat was slung at his back and he carried a knapsack, and explained that in the long summer-vacation he spent his days tramping, thus visiting all his acquaintances. And whether it was 200 or 500 miles he covered in his six weeks' walk, I can't remember : he spoke airily of vast distances and scorned a horse. We chatted for some time ; he told me of his school-children, whom he loved, and lamented that, now they were all growing up and leaving him, his school could no longer boast of

nineteen, its maximum. This man, who had travelled all the world over, was content to till this small corner, cut off from all the world. I thought I should like to teach school in Okuru !

Then we put our saddles in the boat, the two horses followed willingly, and swam behind us to the opposite shore. Near where we landed was a large house—once the hotel. Some beautiful dark-haired children were playing about—one, nursing a very brown baby, might have been a southern French child, and indeed I found they were descended from a French settler. She led me up to the house, chatting all the way, as the West Coast children do : telling me of her six sisters and two brothers (the boys who had rowed us over). Here we had some lunch and then walked to the house of another settler, whom we had already met. He had sent a letter by us to his wife, but it did not need that to ensure us a welcome from Mrs. Powell.

It was washing day, and the lady stood surrounded by kerosene tins, each one boiling on its own little fire ; she received us stir-stick in hand, and pressed us to come in—if only for a cup of tea. She also pressed us to come back, and indeed I should have loved to stay there. But time was flying ; we had still one more visit to pay—to the oldest settler in the district, Mr. Nolan. We heard he lived a mile up the river, but it was a *very long* mile, and the heat was very great. For the first part of the way we were

hemmed in by bush, then we came to clearings. There were good grass-paddocks, with big trees left at intervals, and sleek cattle standing and lying down in the shade. Beyond that was the forest, closed in by purple mountains, and in the foreground some substantial outbuildings, painted red. Then the homestead, with the original little cottage standing close by. I walked up to the door, where flowers grew bright and gay on either side ; and when I knocked, it was opened to me by a lady with a very puzzled face. But in a moment it changed to one of welcome, and she was pressing us to come in, and bustling about getting tea ready. She sent for her husband—Irish like herself. “ What’s this you’re giving them ? ” said he ; “ where’s the whisky ? Is it tea ye would be setting before them ? ” However, I was allowed to have my tea, and we sat for half an hour, hearing of the old days when they took up the uncleared land, and how they brought up their large family, all now married and settled. We talked of the old country, too, but they both said this was the better—yet there was a wistfulness as the old man spoke of that other green west coast so far away. “ A man has a chance to better himself here,” said he, “ and something besides his name to leave his children when he’s gone. I wouldn’t go back to the old country if I could—to live there.”

Transome left me here and returned for the horses, as we found we could cross the river now

the tide was low. My host insisted on walking to the ford, talking the while of those early days, and the hard fight with Nature ; when stores came down at rare intervals in a coasting vessel, and they had to be very self-sufficing. One learns to reverence such lives—lived thus in the wilds, yet keeping fresh and clean the ideas of home and religion, honesty and justice. Then the horses came round a bend and we said good-bye ; his last little act of courtesy was to cut me a riding switch of supple-jack, and hand it to me as we rode away. When we entered the Okuru there was but a foot of water, and at the point we had reached in the morning we found a sunny stream, rippling over shingly shallows, where then it had flowed a deep, blue river.

I did so want to go farther—not to have to turn homewards ; but it was not to be—and perhaps after all it left a glamour over this last day—the glamour of the unattained ; always the thing longed for is greater than the thing achieved, as the seeking is an intenser pleasure than the finding.

The people of the West had welcomed us everywhere, had bidden us come back to them ; but would we ever come ?

Ah ! little Okuru, lying in the sun by your lagoon, where the daily rise and fall of the tides is the chief event ; with your children playing by your sunny waters, and the big mountains

sleeping around you ; will you ever draw us all these leagues again ?

When we reached the shore the tide was out, and the horses set off at a gallop. Behind us a squall was working up from seawards, and in front the distant headlands, one behind the other, looked blue and unreal, their trees seeming to hang in the air, unattached to earth—a curious effect I had noticed once or twice before. Soon the first drops of rain fell, and in a few minutes it was lashing us fiercely, with the wind driving the sand in clouds along the beach, and when we got in we were as wet as though we had been in the Haast. There was a nice old man sitting in the kitchen, as I went in to leave my wet riding-things to dry. He seemed very pleased to see me, and reminded me we had met him a long way back, when he had been journeying on foot to make application for his old-age pension. “And I hope you got it,” I said. “Oh, aye, they gave it to me right enough,” and went on : “D’ye know a place they call Newtonairds ?” I assured him I did. “Aye, it’s a fine town, and the Airds is a fine country. Scrabo Hill’s a fine hill, whiles I wisht I was there.”

“ There’s Newtonairds that bonnie toon
That sits aboon the sea.
An’ Scrabo Hill, o’ high renoon,
Wha hides my luve frae me.”

Afterwards I heard how he had saved a good sum of money for his old age. Then came some smart speculators, who floated a bogus company to



Photograph by

FOLIAGE ON THE HAAST TRACK.

C. A. Tomlinson

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prepare flax-fibre—even sent down machinery and engaged men to cut flax. When they had cleaned out the savings of many a trusting West Coaster, they decamped. No one was ever brought to justice, and my nice old man from Newtonards lost his all. He was living with the ferryman and his brother, and everyone was very kind to him. We had engaged the ferryman—Ted, as I must call him—to guide us over the pass. It did not seem to matter at all about the ferry; our old friend would take charge, and nobody but the mail-man was likely to want to cross in the next fortnight.

That was a gala night. Another goose was cooked for us. Some of the men from the Survey Camp up the Haast came in. One of them (whom I found to be the father of the beautiful children at Okuru) brought me a handkerchief full of exquisite ferns, some of which I had not seen before. He had a passion for ferns, and promised me a dried collection. I have it still, a reminder of that night. We sat late talking, while the storm raged outside. This man, with his love for ferns, and for the untrodden mountains where he had climbed and prospected in years gone by, described for us in vivid language the practically unexplored region west of Mount Aspiring. He spoke of wonderful ice-falls, of great glaciers, of a river that shot full-grown from beneath an arch of ice; of ice-caves, and a vast blue ice-fall where thousands of tons plunged into an abyss with deafening roar.

“Aye,” he said, “and the finest sight I ever saw was the top of Mount Aspiring, where it rises up like a great silver cone against the blue.” We questioned him eagerly, could we see it? “Yes,” he could take us there, but it meant camping, with stores and outfit. The idea remained in our heads—the idea of the Silver Cone.

Next day the storm was past, a serene blue sky spread overhead, and we gathered, a little group at the gate with the waiting horses, till Ted should appear. We bade farewell to our kind host and hostess, who were greatly concerned that there was no whisky in the house to tender us a parting glass, and at seven o’clock, no Ted appearing, we rode away down a long green alley in a bush-grown swamp. The going for us was slow, with mud holes every few yards, but in about an hour’s time we heard the pad of horses’s hoofs, and Ted came cantering up. As usual he said little, merely remarking he had heard we were at Okuru, storm-stayed, and then took command of the expedition. He quickened our pace, and I rode after the big, stalwart figure sitting straight and square, legs dangling, only toes in the stirrups; and how that mare of his could cover the ground! She was unshod, and but a three-year-old, caught a short time back in the river-bed—where the mares and foals run practically wild. Ted could talk when it came to talking about his mare! And he told me in three weeks he had broken her in, and ridden her in the Christmas races on the sands,

where her great strength had carried her far ahead of lighter horses. Now she was his willing slave. She would stand all day where he left her. She loved to snuff at his tobacco smoke, and if he stood talking on the track, her big velvet nose was continually poking him in the back, demanding attention.

“Don’t you ever shoe the horses ? ” I asked.

“They’re better without shoes—those of yours will be about worn off by the time we get through, and this mare’s hoofs are as hard as iron. They run in the river-bed all the time when they’re foals,” Ted answered.

The going, when we got out of the swamps and among the foot-hills, was of the worst : a constant succession of sudden dips into peaty bottoms full of interwoven roots, up stony, steep ascents—always under the dark, heavy bush canopy. For a short way the track would be fairly dry and even, then more ups and downs, and a sudden plunge into the river-bed below. Sometimes this gave us half a mile of good going on sand or grass, but more often the long grass grew rank, and the horses forced their way through it breast high. We passed “Mosquito Hill” on the opposite shore, heavily covered with trees ; it was somewhere below that we had tried conclusions with the Haast. Looking back now from the entrance to the gorge it looked a beautiful, fertile valley some miles wide, and little sign of the cruel river that has taken more toll of wayfarers than almost any other on the Coast.

Leaving this open part, the track once more became a narrow path, lined by tall ferns of many kinds ; the high trees met overhead, and every space was filled by loops and twisted ropes of creepers and lianes. Everything was climbing upon something else, struggling upwards for its share of air and sunlight. It seemed almost dark coming from the blaze without. Ted was some way ahead, Transome had stayed behind in the river-bed, and I rode alone in this shadowy forest. Suddenly I heard voices, and I could see Ted had dismounted, and standing by the track were four or five men, drawn up to welcome us to the Haast and invite us to a repast at the Survey Camp. Two of our friends of the night before were among them. They said they did not mean the only lady to cross the Haast should go through the pass without being entertained ! So dismounting, I was led to a clearing. They had only shifted camp that morning, the swags were still rolled up, and the tents had not been pitched—a picturesque medley of bundles and cooking thing lay about. They made me sit on a roll of tents, and Transome, coming up, on another. The cook was recklessly tearing open his stores searching for delicacies ; another man tried to open a tin of pears, and failing that, attacked one of pine-apple. In a few minutes we were grouped about, sitting and standing, lurching off girdle scones, currant cakes, pine-apple, and “billy” tea, and everyone was anxious to talk, all so keen, so interested. Some of them

[C. Broken
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APPERTYN HAVSTI.

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Photograph by APPERTYN HAVSTI.

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had been in camp for months without a break ; others had been on this Survey for several years. It is a hard, rough life ; felling trees, making tracks through the unknown mountains, fording and swagging on foot, shifting their camp from place to place. Yet all but one seemed full of life and cheerfulness.

“ All that he has in camp or homestead proffers
To stranger guest at once a stranger host,
Proudest to see accepted what he offers,
Given without a boast ! ”

But I saw Ted furtively looking at his watch and I knew that we must not linger. Transome was deep in a discussion over the miracles at Lourdes ; and there were so many things these men could tell me, that I was loath to go. I asked them about the kiwis—those strange wingless birds whose feathers are more like coarse hair than those of feathered fowl. They told me in the early days they were common everywhere, but that the stoats and weasels (introduced to kill out the rabbits on the east coast) have spread into the woods, and the kiwis get scarcer every year. They are night birds with immensely long beaks curved downwards, made for probing in spongy moss or soft earth. They only hatch one egg I believe, because it is nearly as large as the body of the adult bird ! Of wekas or Maori hens there were plenty. They are very fearless, and often will come into camp, stealing anything they find small enough to carry off. Once a man had laid his set of teeth beside him on the grass, and a prowling

weka snatched them up, and ran away with them. There was a hue and cry, but the weka had the best of it, and he saw his teeth no more. They have curious eyes, red like rubies, and the wings are but weakly developed—they often reminded me of a hen pheasant whose tail had been plucked out, and they can run quite as fast.

By this time Ted was making signs that we *must* go, so we bade farewell to the hospitable camp, and went back to where we had left the horses by the narrow track. I found here one of the loveliest lace-like ferns I had seen—full two feet or more in height, and tapered to the point from ten inches at the base, and was so fine, it was like a fairy network. It was past eleven o'clock, and for nearly two hours we journeyed on. The gorge was narrowing, the mountains getting steeper. In some places they were quite precipitous, and glorious waterfalls came leaping from the rocky heights above. A mid-day rest was called on a grass flat in the river-bed, where the horses could eat their fill. Then on again, and towards evening we were coming down a descent above a clearing. Ted had dismounted to let down some bars, when suddenly I saw smoke arising through the trees. I called to him that someone must be camping in front of us. He said nothing audible, but with a perturbed look went off to investigate. I followed more slowly. In a little clearing stood a hut no bigger than the Blue River hut, but more dilapidated outwardly—



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[C. A. Tomlinson

THE CLARK HUT: WHERE WE PASSED THE NIGHT WITH
MOUNT ALEXANDER IN THE BACKGROUND.

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for this one had no door at all—Ted's head was inside, and he was gesticulating and enforcing silence on someone within. I heard the words “Lady, Shush—hush!” repeated many times, so I forebore to go on. Presently Ted's head was withdrawn, and an elderly man came out half-dressed, who gave me a scanty greeting, and disappeared round the hut. I dismounted, wishing Transome was not so far behind. There was still somebody else inside, and that hut could *not* hold five—at least I hoped I should not be one of them if it did! And now the second occupant came out. He was attired in riding breeches and an old Norfolk jacket, and carried his stockings in his hand; he was completely stuck over with “biddies”—the hateful little hooked seeds of a species of acæna, that cling so persistently nothing but scraping with a knife will dislodge them. He greeted me cheerily in a broad Scotch voice, and held up his stockings for my inspection. They were a veritable mat—he said he was thinking of hanging them in the sun for a fortnight, perhaps then he might get the biddies out of them! His great solicitude was to give me tea. Soon he and his man had the billy boiling and had foraged out some mugs, and when Transome rode up we were drinking tea, and chatting on most friendly terms.

We had chanced on the chief surveyor going down to join his camp. He was travelling light with only a swag of blankets and very little food. He and his man had had a hard day: they had

found all the creeks and smaller rivers in flood owing to the heat. The usual crossings were unfordable, and long detours had had to be made—climbing through the bush, fording rivers up to their armpits—and they were just getting into a change of clothes when we arrived. Hearing all this, when the surveyor announced his intention of sleeping in the bush, we protested strongly. Here were we quite fresh, so were the horses : we would go on to the second hut seven or eight miles further, and leave them to dry their clothes and smoke their pipes in peace.

But the surveyor only laughed. “ I’m a bushman,” said he ; “ I haven’t seen my home for four years. I’m as happy sleeping in the bush as in a bed ; and I’ll get the best of it anyway, for you’ll get all the mosquitoes inside ! ”

It was useless talking, so we invited them to share our food ; we had plenty of roast goose and hard-boiled eggs, which the surveyor said were quite a treat to him. The accommodation inside was extremely simple. There was just a platform about a foot off the floor filling more than half the space. This was covered with fern, and along the edge of it we sat most amicably, eating our goose in our fingers (but Ted cut slices of bread and butter for me). In front of us was the wide cavern of the chimney, where logs blazed cheerfully. It was getting so cold I was glad to sit within, for we were now among high mountains, where the snow lies all the year round. Mount Alexander, opposite

to where we were, runs up to 8,000 feet. The surveyor was a very mine of information. He told me of the tiny, short-tailed cuckoo, whose home is in New Guinea. It is but a couple or three inches long, yet it travels all those weary leagues of sea to nest in these remote solitudes, "and the 'why' of this," said the surveyor, "is raising a very large question. Whether it was all land once, and the birds acquired the habit of flying south to nest ; or a succession of islands, where they flitted from resting place to resting place—let the scientists tell us. Certain it is, we bushmen can tell the date of the month when first we hear their long-drawn whistling note—they arrive to a day, year after year, in their accustomed haunts." He told me, too, of the shining, or long-tailed, cuckoo, who also hails from New Guinea. It is a larger bird, mottled brown and white, and both have the habit of laying an egg in other birds' nests, but neither has the cry of our bird at home. In both species it is more like a whistle. There was so much I wanted to know ; secrets of the forest that unfolded a little to me now and then, but closed again before I grasped them. But we had all had a long day ; the surveyor said "good-night," and went out to where his man had lit a big fire under the trees, and where, he assured me, they would sleep sound, rolled in their blankets. Ted had a rug with him, and, protest as I might, he insisted on spreading it for me in the corner of the hut ; and

here, propped against my pack for a cushion, I passed the night. For a long time I did not sleep, but lay thinking of the day's ride; the dark forest; those sheer mountain walls and the tiny track going on and on between them. The mosquitoes hummed in my ears (though they were not the blood-thirsty terrors of the Blue River hut)—from time to time one of the men knocked the ashes out of his pipe, or got up to replenish the logs; and, between sleeping and waking, I heard their voices in a low-toned conversation, that like the track, seemed to go on endlessly. Then it grew very cold, the mosquitoes stopped humming; and when I awoke again, the hut was empty. A cold, grey light was growing outside; the door-less entry became "a glimmering square," and I shivered as I collected my hat and gloves, and began setting out the remains of last night's supper. Then Ted came back, and brewed a billy-full of cocoa; the surveyor appeared—more dishevelled, and still covered with biddies, but cheerful as ever,—and assured me they had passed an excellent night, disturbed neither by mosquitoes nor frost.

Outside, the foliage was delicately frosted with silver, and the hut's roof white with rime; behind the mountains on the right of the gorge the sun was rising, flushing the snows on Mount Alexander. While the others busied themselves getting the horses saddled and the packs adjusted, the surveyor and I watched the rose turn to gold, then fade, and the peaks glitter sharp and pure against

the sky. All the valley below was filled with blue mist slowly drifting along the bases of the mountains. It was all so lonely, so remote. Then the horses were led up and we parted with many hopes we should meet again, and once more we took our Indian-file way through the forest.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST STAGE.

The glory from the Western hills
Falls fading, spark on spark,
Only a mighty sadness fills
The spaces of the dark.

G. C. WHITNEY.

THE mist floating in the valley was very tantalizing, hiding so much I longed to see. The scene was changing entirely. We were now riding up a wide river-bed of grey sands and gravel ; crossing and re-crossing, but never swimming. Then the gorge opened into a wide valley, stretching away on our left, to high snow mountains, and unexplored peaks and glaciers. The Lansborough river comes down here, bringing the main body of water to the Haast, and it is said it was due to a mistake that the small river entering it on the right was named after Sir Julius Von Haast. He was the first to penetrate through these mountains from sea to sea. It is getting a long time ago now, but I don't think the track can have changed much since the day when he and his men forced their way through !

The Lansborough takes its rise in the Southern Alps, where a net-work of glaciers feeds many small rivers, some of which find outlet towards Hunter's river and Lake Hawea eastwards, while



Photograph by

NEAR THE JUNCTION OF THE RIVERS, HAAST PASS

C. A. Taittison

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others drain into the Lansborough valley. Our course was up the smaller valley to the right. Before us lay a desolate broken bit of country, and here, without Ted, inevitably we should have been lost, for one might be three or four miles from the track without knowing. He never hesitated ; he and his mare pressed on, through the wild scrub and shingle flats at the junction of the rivers, across water or dry land, and we followed confidently. There was, he told us, an old track along the hills, long since spoiled by landslips, and now overgrown and impossible for horses—that must have been where the surveyor got the biddies, I thought.

As we entered the Upper Haast the sun broke through completely. Looking back, we saw the snow-fields of the Lansborough glittering against the glorious blue, with a dark mass of precipitous mountains at the junction of the valleys. No longer was the Haast a hungry, treacherous river. Here it was a lovely blue stream, widening in places to broad reaches of quiet water, where the paradise ducks swam with their almost grown-up families, uttering their plaintive cry and rising and flying short distances as we disturbed them. It is a cry in keeping with the loneliness of Nature among these untrodden hills. Before us stretched a fair green lawn—so smooth it seemed almost as if it had been cut—surrounded no longer by the western bush. Here grew the first outliers of the beech forests of the eastern slopes. The dense jungle-

growth was no more, and other signs began to show themselves. Instead of cantering over that smooth, green lawn, we had to go very carefully. It was riddled with rabbit-holes. The rabbits were there in hundreds, popping about—grey, yellow, and black, and with them a colony of English starlings.

When we left this fair spot behind us, we entered a narrow gorge, passing near its entrance the second hut—a more miserable and forlorn erection than the Clark, where we had spent the night. Deep in the bottom of the ravine a tumbling torrent roared and plunged. The rock walls in places overhung the path, propped up once or twice by tree-trunks ; there was only just room to pass under without dismounting. Our guide left us here to go on ahead to a second camp. The one and only bridge in the pass, thrown across an otherwise impassable torrent, was threatening to give way, and another brother of Ted's, with five or six men, were felling timber to build a new one. The bridge carried us safely over at the junction of two waterfalls, where it was thrown across between creeper-grown precipices. Here the bush was pine again, and very heavy ; big rimus lay about, stripped of their branches, ready to be sawn up and hauled into position. High above, on a rocky ledge, a row of small tents betokened the permanent camp, but the men were far afield, for the suitable trees have to be sought often at a great distance. A little beyond this lies the Divide,



Photography

IN THE UPPER HASTE.

C. A. Franklin

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where the deer-country begins. We were told that occasionally the stags will wander thus far, but that they will never enter the western forests, and though seen at the bridge, they never cross it. Ted's mare was standing patiently where he had left her by the tents, and we dismounted and awaited the upshot of events. He came back in a little while with a message from "the boss" to say we were to make ourselves at home and have our breakfast—but it was nearer ten o'clock than breakfast time! In methodical fashion he proceeded to obey these injunctions; washed up plates and mugs; foraged for some cold roast mutton and bread, and set the billy to boil. He then called us and directed me where to sit; he had set out a bench with knives and forks, plates and spoons, and we felt quite civilized. He gave the cold mutton to Transome, but for me was reserved cold goose. Truly no one could have been better taken care of! Then the men came back to lunch, and showed me all their camp arrangements, and their bunks. One of them, stooping, pulled out a square packing-case from under one of them. "We couldn't get along without that," he said; "that's the library." It was full of papers, some old books and "sixpennies," and they all bore marks of constant reading.

After I got back I sent a parcel of books and magazines as a contribution to the library; but I never heard if it reached its destination. The "boss" invited us to go down into the Wills

River gorge to see the falls. Here the whole volume of the river plunges between narrow, rock walls—a glorious *melée* of tumbling foam and bright green water. Everything was drenched with spray, and the climb back over slippery rock through wet creepers and ferns was hard work. And then we said good-bye to these last Westland friends, and started on the final stage. That night we would go to bed in the ordinary way, in ordinary beds, having probably dined off excellent Otago mutton. I am afraid no real gratitude was in my heart for these mercies. The surveyor sleeping happily in the bush : the schoolmaster teaching those few lambs in the wilderness : my friends among the settlers' wives all had helped to spoil me for the return to the routine of daily life.

It was much more of a climb now, though the track was at no point too steep to ride, and we followed each other in single file. A cloudless sky above, rushing water on all hands, and, except for that, the deep silence of the bush. Gradually it had lost its tropical look, and we came to bare cliffs where the mountains seemed to come down on one's head. Coming up a narrow gorge we rounded a shoulder of cliff, and saw high up the opposite mountain, the Haast glacier—not the one of that name farther north. This one seemed to topple over a razor-back mountain, poising itself like the crest of a mighty wave some thousands of feet above us. We could not see

(C. A. Tomlinson
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THE FISH RIVER: BEECH FOREST

Photograph by



whence it came—a shoulder of snow-capped mountain intervened—but the more we scanned it through the glasses the stranger it appeared. As we surmounted the next ridge above a sunny pool with shingly bottom, the streams were still all running west, but beyond the ridge, lo ! they ran east, down to a wide valley where Ted told us the Fish river ran. The beech forest had finally conquered, and the hills rolled away, evenly furred with dark, monotonous green. A stake by the track marked the junction of Westland with Otago.

Alas, I viewed it with no feeling of exultation ! It was only by the promise we should come again and complete that unfinished stage of the Main South Road that Transome roused me to any feeling of satisfaction. I let the others go on with the horses down the steep descent, preferring to walk. But the track was hot and dry, and the yellow clay along the sides, was cracked with heat. Under the beeches was but “a ragged penury of shade”; their little evergreen leaves looked so parched and leathery after the cool, damp forest, and I was glad to get down to the horses waiting at the ford.

Not thus had I walked down many a descent in Westland—where the great trees made a shadowy tunnel, and waters sprayed one from among the ferns. We cantered fast over stretches of grass by the river till we came to a real road. Then the hills fell back, and the forest gradually came to

an end. Sheep pasture took its place with corn-fields and hayfields along the wide valley. There were English trees now clustering round little homesteads, and a sunny stretch of country ended at a turquoise-blue line. There lay Lake Wanaka, closed all round by bare mountains which rose in broken peaks and rugged outlines to the south. Verily a different world. The horses seemed to like the change and cantered fast.

Ted would have liked to show the superiority of his mare, and we raced for a stretch, but it was not fair to the horses after their long climb. We drew rein and very soberly we arrived at the Widow Pipson's. She was standing under the verandah of a little house set in the midst of a field of waving grass; and whether she expected us or not, I don't know—there had been no one to tell her—but she evinced no surprise, and took me into a sweet little room, supplying all my wants. When I joined the others we sat down to a most appetizing meal. I remember there were chops, and I remember, too, Ted continuing his care of my wants—under all circumstances he was the same competent, commanding person; he ought to have been a commissariat officer or a field-marshall.

Afterwards we stood outside in the warm, still air, watching the setting sun colour the bare mountains hemming in the valley—first blue, then gold, then pink, and lastly grey; and when the hush of evening came with the dusk, we went

inside to write our long-delayed letters and diaries, and "so to bed."

And though next day was not really to be our last—for we had seven more days' travelling—yet to me it was the end, and when we said good-bye to Ted, it was good-bye to Westland and all it had come to mean to me.

Of Wanaka, among its blue mountains, I will not write; or of that long day riding round the base of the rugged hills that enclose Hawea, where the storms chased each other, lashing the steel-blue waters into foam. Or of the golden evening that followed, when we crossed the Hawea plain and saw the harvesters in blue dungarees binding the yellow corn; or of straight roads leading to little homesteads, dotted about in their formal fir plantations, all rather parched and dusty and bounded by sun-baked hills. I saw it all with a sick longing for the cool dim forest, for the ever-murmuring waters, for the sights and sounds I had learned to love :

"Lost is the sense of noiseless, sweet escape
From dust of stony plains, from sun and gale,
When the feet tread where shade and silence drape
The stems with peace beneath the leafy veil,
Or when a pleasant rustling stirs each shape
Creeping with whisperings that rise and fail
Through labyrinths half-lit by chequered play
Of light on golden moss now burned away."

I had entered the promised land. I had seen a world as it was before man came there; in after years it could never be quite the same again. For if I went back to it, I might not find the Fairy Land of my dreams. The forest world must

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give place before the fire and the axe, but the memory of it, as I saw it in my brief sojourn, can never pass away.

So, as the sun sank behind the purple barrier of the western mountains, out-lining their edges in gold: and their long shadows stretched across the plain: and the harvesters came back in the gloaming: I said, Farewell.

PART II.
THE SILVER CONE.



CHAPTER I.

THE START.

To youth there comes a whisper out of the west
 O loiterer, hasten where there waits for thee
A life to build, a love therein to nest
 And a Man's work serving the age to be.
Peace, peace awhile ! before his tireless feet
 Hill beyond hill the road in sunlight goes,
He breathes the breath of morning clear and sweet
 And his eyes love the high eternal snows.

HENRY NEWBOLT.

FOR some months we had been sojourning in the City of the Plains, and as summer drew on and wide roads grew dusty, and the freshness faded from trees and gardens, a great longing grew up in our hearts for the cool, dim forests, for the snow peaks, and blue glacier rivers : and little by little the plan grew. The first seeds of it were sown far away in South Westland by our black-bearded friend at the Haast. We remembered how he had fired our fancy by his glowing descriptions of a region where scarcely any one but their Survey party had penetrated ; we remembered his talk of ice-caves and waterfalls, but above all we remembered how he talked of “a great Silver Cone against the blue,” and in the dusty city that Silver Cone drew us irresistibly. We would go and see it.

Nothing to me comes up to these free wanderings

by forest track and river-bed, far among the silent mountains, whose loneliness is one of their greatest charms. The inner room of memory is hung with pictures, some few of which I have tried to make visible to others. . . .

If they feel the fresh breeze blowing, and the flood of sunshine, and the blue of New Zealand skies above them as they read ; if they see the climbing tangle of forest on the mountain flanks, the snows above the mighty cliffs, and the swift-rushing glacier rivers, I shall feel it was worth while to have tried to share with them these memory pictures.

And so I began collecting stores, books, cooking things, etc., and a medley collection was stowed into a deep sailor's-bag and a sack, and with rope and axe we sent them down south. Sleeping-bags were purchased ; they were of a cool sea-green colour, all in keeping, it seemed to me, with a couch on a glacier. Of information as to routes or camping ground, we could get none. No one apparently lived there, except a semi-mythical Highlander, and we had to leave matters till we should be nearer the scene of our adventures. Then we sent on the two horses—the Scorpion and Tom, and so it came about that on Christmas Eve we were speeding south, leaving the dust and glare behind us, our spirits rising moment by moment as we neared the long, blue barrier of hills, and knew that beyond their utmost purple rim lay all of which our friend had told us.

A year had passed since we four—the horses and ourselves—had gone on the long trail together, and well they knew when the packs and oilskins were strapped on, it meant long days on the hills, pleasant rests by streams where juicy lush grass grows, and every inn and stopping place was a well-remembered landmark.

Only yesterday we were in the City of the Plains. We had left those sun-scorched yellow plains behind, with their formal clumps of dark fir and light green poplars. At Timaru we changed into a dawdling little train with its toy engine, which brought us the forty miles up among green pasture hills, by a wide valley where wheatfields waved all golden, where we slowed down and threw out Christmas parcels to waiting horsemen, and drew up at little stations where a buggy or two, or a horse tied to the fence, awaited friends coming to spend their Christmas in the country. Nobody hurried, least of all the engine-driver, who frequently had to get down for conversation with his acquaintances, and it took us till seven o'clock to cover forty miles, and we had started at 4.15 ! The day had been sultry, though, fortunately for us, it had been cloudy, and now we felt we were really at the beginning of our journey. All the rest must be done on horseback, and before us was nearly a week of travelling, for we should not try to do more than thirty miles a day. We found the horses looking well and happy in a good grass paddock whither they had been sent some days

ago, and the stores, gone south by steamers, coaches, and carriers, should meet us at Pembroke on Lake Wanaka.

Fairlie's wide streets and little white houses looked nearly blistered with the heat, and nothing could less resemble a northern Christmas.

Very early next morning I drew up my blind and looked out. The glorious Christmas star hung like a globe of fire near the low moon, wreaths of white mist lay along the distant hills and mountains, and the east was flushing rosy—it was only a little after three and I went back to bed. About seven we strapped on the packs and set forth. The first stage was but six miles, to a little school-house where a Christmas service was to be held at eight o'clock. Some children on bare-back ponies came galloping up, and their brother, whom we knew, took our horses, and tied them to the fence, while his little sisters took me into church. I think the congregation numbered ten all told, but we sang a Christmas hymn, and when we came out everybody shook hands and wished each other the Season's greetings. Rain was falling gently, like June rain at home. We rode to an inn for breakfast, and later paid a visit to and had Christmas dinner with our little friends. That night we slept at Burke's Pass, some 2,000 feet above the plains. The air was deliciously fresh after the stuffiness below, and we strolled up the pass before bedtime. There is a graveyard at the top, and it seemed as if the pioneers of these regions must

have mostly met violent deaths. On one stone we read : "Killed by the kick of a horse" ; on another : "Found in the snow" ; on a third : "Found drowned." The wind grew cold and moaned fitfully in the gloomy firs that have grown all too thick among the graves, and we turned back to the cheery inn, clean sheets, and comfortable beds.

Glorious sunshine greeted us next morning. We had only thirteen miles to get over, and rode away joyously through the tawny tussock hills, down to a plain bounded by violet distance. The mirage shimmered on its farther edge, the breeze swayed the tussock grass and changed it from golden to dusky grey, as the cloud shadows passed along the hills. We mounted a ridge, and there lay Lake Tekapo, whose waters are always turquoise blue, though a smaller lake behind the encircling hills is deep indigo. Beyond, the line of the Southern Alps had come in sight ; peak beyond peak, sharp and jagged in outline, the higher ones white and pure ; and even at forty miles off the great glaciers were visible. There was Mount Cook, towering above them all, who looks down east and west, on yellow plains and billowy forest, two worlds divided by a mighty wall.

We got to the inn just as it was getting unbearably hot. It is close to the lake shore, very convenient for bathing, but the water on the hottest day is cold as the glaciers which feed it. The outlet is a deep cutting through which the

whole volume of the lake tries to escape, eddying and swirling beneath a suspension bridge. That afternoon we had a long walk, and later sat by the lake watching the hills change from blue to pink, and then to grey, and the last ray of sun touch the highest peak of snow. Then, as all the sky grew red, and the colours on earth faded and grew dead, we strolled back to supper, and to bed.

There were long, white bands of mist curling down over the hills next morning, but the sun shone gloriously over the lake, and we started—not so early as we might have—for Pukaki. Of that ride across the plains my remembrance is one of painful endurance. The nor'-wester was as the breath of a furnace and drove the dust in clouds along the track, or tracks, for the highway was at least as wide as four ordinary roads, and is simply made by driving on it. It was a thirty mile stage, and we cantered fast lest we and the horses should be grilled. When we came in sight of Pukaki we felt we must be at the end, but the road wound interminably round the wide bays, among enormous boulders, ice-borne in the days when the great glaciers reached out much farther than they do now. It was with intense relief we saw a patch of fir trees and the red inn close by the outlet of the lake, where we rode the horses into the water and got rid of the dusty sweat, and found we were in time for the mid-day meal. The place was full of shearers and tourists, and a bustle of coming and going. Later we went out

and I got two sketches of the lake with its green, opaque-looking water, and the magnificent mass of Mount Cook rearing up out of its upper end, looking quite near, though still forty miles away. The lake receives several snow-rivers, among others the Tasman, from the seventeen-mile long glacier. On either side were bare mountains, and at sunset we watched the colours flame out on their crests and die away, and the sky turn pink, then slowly fade, and the ghostly snows gleam out from the dusk.

By five next morning we were cantering over the Mackenzie plains, determined to cross these shelterless stretches before the heat grew unbearable. They are bounded by level terraces of river formation, and stretch from ten to fourteen miles between encircling hills, and to the eye appear almost dead level. There was but one spot where trees sheltered the road, and there the shearers were mustering to breakfast; the tents stood in rows, and the cooks were busy frying chops—a cheerful scene. We had six miles more to go, and we rode fast, for though not eight o'clock the heat was overpowering on these treeless plains. As we splashed through the many branches of the Ahuriri, winding like blue ribbons edged with green, we and the horses revelled in the clear, cool water, and came in fresh and very ready for breakfast. Even at this hour the thermometer registered 84 degrees in the shade and 110 degrees in the sun.

It is little short of amazing that anyone should have selected Omarama as a settlement. It lies on the edge of the plain, with hungry, brown red hills rising round, and the far-off Ben Ohau range shutting out the view of the high Alps, which here and there show a snow peak, peeping over as it were. The plain is burnt bare, and is a uniform dull brown, riddled with rabbit-holes, and the only green is the patch of poplars and willows by the river. Looking closer, one sees that there is a thin covering of green on the bare hills, but the sun was fast taking all the life out of it. The road south wound away among these hills, sun-baked and dreary—one could have imagined the scene in Central Spain: the same hard blue sky, bare brown hills, and sunburnt road. The shelter of the inn was exceeding grateful, and so was a breakfast of fresh trout; and after that I reposed most of the day, till the afternoon brought a slight coolness and the blue river drew us irresistibly. But even when bathing, one was obliged to wear a hat.

We had made up our minds to push on that night. The plains were too unutterably hot and wearying, and ahead was coolness and blowing breezes on the hill tops. And so by seven o'clock we were riding over the last eight miles of plain, a hot wind blowing; and the horses left a long cloud of dust as we cantered across. In front was a bare range, rising abruptly from the level, which cut off the wind as we got nearer, and we fairly sweltered.

The colouring grew more weird and strange every minute. Behind Omarama the hills turned to reddish violet, the Ohau range hung like a dark wall in front, and over it the snow peaks peeped, flaming orange as the sun touched them. The nearer hills faded from blue to black, and when we left the plain and entered the river valley, dusk was falling. After a few miles we turned into the gorge of the Lindis and passed a desolate-looking station where there had been a great muster of sheep. Thousands were penned in paddocks waiting for the shearers. The air was filled with the long-drawn baa's from those many throats, the dogs kept up an incessant barking and yapping, and the hands stood about smoking, or finishing penning the last batch. Just beyond this busy scene we rode up to what looked like a troop of horses that scattered in sudden flight dashing up the hills, and we saw they were red deer; beautiful creatures with heads half grown and bodies round and fat as heifers.

Then the dark fell, and the purple night closed us softly round, and we could just see the track winding up among dark hills with a strip of starlit sky above us. All detail vanished, the wind dropped, and not a sound broke the stillness but the beat of the horses' feet and the tinkle of a little stream beside the path. We had been told of a flat some two hours up the pass, where good English grass and clover grew. In the starlight it was difficult to discover, and Transome got down

several times to look for it, but when we came to it the little white dots of the clover heads were easily visible, and there was no doubt about the horses' appreciation when we took off the bridles and let them rest for an hour. Their satisfied cropping mingled with the murmur of the stream; no other sound save the cry of a night bird now and then, disturbed the utter silence. I stood about watching the stars, and though we had been up since before four o'clock, scarcely felt sleepy. When we mounted and rode on again we got among still higher hills, dark and mysterious in the night, but always the ribbon of road wound duskily white ahead of us. About midnight I grew desperately sleepy, snatches of dreams were every now and again disturbed by a stumble or change from down-hill to up-hill. The horses varied their pace but little and travelled steadily. When we came to a long boundary fence with a gate, we tied them there and getting out the oilskins, lay down on the springy bracken for an hour-and-a-half's rest. I remember watching the stars for a little and then knew no more till I wakened stiff and tired, with my feet very cold, and inclined to question the luxury of a bed on the hillside.

Then we mounted for the last stage of the thirty-six miles to the Lindis. A white light was growing up behind the black outline of the hills, and soon the moon rose and the long descent began. Now that we had more light we could canter occasionally, but for the most part we walked in the uncertain

light. By a little after three we were at the Morven Hills station, and in the dawning light one could imagine it was white with frost—an old-world Christmastide. The stream, down which the road runs, had increased in size since we crossed the watershed, and had become a noisy river between rocky defiles. We crossed it at a shallow ford where the homestead lay on a wide flat ; weeping-willows and English trees lined the banks, and a shady road led past the house. And now we saw the cause of the whiteness. Every place was covered with dog daisies ; river-banks, roadside, everywhere an advancing army crept over the hills. Sleek cows stood and lay about waiting for the milking. Among the station hacks a fine stag was grazing, who dashed into the river and disappeared over the hills, disturbed by our approach ; a white horse whinnied at us and one or two dogs barked enquiringly, but otherwise the station was silent, wrapped in sleep. The shearers' camp, a long row of white tents, seemed to have been newly pitched, the flaps up for coolness sake—let us see the men and packs lying about inside. We rode through them, and not a man lifted his head, and on across the flat where we saw another small herd of deer, which bounded away at sight of us.

There was only an hour's riding from here—less if we hurried. But it was Sunday morning, and we did not want to disturb the people at the inn so early, so we dawdled along down a rocky

defile by a gushing river, just like a Scotch trout stream, and at five o'clock came to the Lindis Hotel. The little, long stone building was fast asleep, but the door was open ; we unsaddled, carried in our things, and Transome led away the horses to feed them. I got out a wicker-chair and went to sleep in the sun.

A little after six I went round to the back of the inn and knocked at a window, and, fortunately, at the right one ! for the hotel was full of shearers. Mrs. Carthy recognized my voice (although I had stayed but a night here the year before) and called to me to come in, and she would have tea and a room ready in no time. But, taking my things from my pack, I went instead to the river, and came back from my splash as fresh as paint, to find Transome talking to the innkeeper over a cup of tea. He was protesting we should have come in last night, and declared he "Never got to bed till two o'clock with these shearers coming and going."

I found a room ready, and was glad enough to lie down, and at ten Mrs. Carthy called us to a famous breakfast of fried trout and scones. I have often had trout in New Zealand, but those huge pinky-yellow fellows out of the Lindis river seemed to have a special flavour. And here I must confess for the first and only time I saw a trout shot (and eat it, too) ; indeed they are so fat and lazy they despise bait and flies, and netting is the only way to take them—unless. . . . but we must draw a veil over the rest.

CHAPTER II.

DEAD MAN'S GULLY.

A land of camps where seldom is sojourning,
Where men, like the dim fathers of our race,
Halt for a time, and next day unreturning,
Fare ever on apace.

THOMAS W. HENRY.

THE long hot day slipped restfully away. The horses spent it down among the rich grass by the river, whither the Scorpion had made off the first opportunity—no bare paddocks for her ladyship! and we did not trouble to bring them back. New Year's Day had come round, and we made a start in the afternoon. During the morning some welcome showers had fallen, and the yellow hills had just a tinge of green about them, and seemed more inviting than thirty miles of dusty road. Mr. Carthy's directions were not very clear: we knew we had to get over the hills between the Lindis and the deep basins of the lakes and rivers beyond, and we started out confident of finding our way as we so often had done before. All went well till we came to a hollow in the hills blocked in front by steep tussock slopes, a gorge on the right winding down through ever wilder and wilder crags and towering hills. We tried in all directions for a track—the only one was down this forbidding gully. Further down we came to an old forsaken

camp ; holes and heaps of stones marked it as a gold-seeker's abode, only a sod chimney and a pole with a tattered remnant of tent remained—all life had long ago departed elsewhere. Sometimes the track was lost, and reappeared again like a scratch across the hills—down, down we went, then halted ; this was too bad for horses, and we returned, but seek as we would no other road was there, and we once more went down the gully. This time we got some distance further, and then into a narrow defile where the rock walls shut us in, and the track was choked with scrub and thorns. Through this we forced our way round an elbow in the gully, and saw a slight track rising over the shoulder of a shaley hill. We literally dragged ourselves and the horses up, and after a weary climb reached a summit, only to find it fell away in barren rocks to another nightmare of a gully, and behind us the one we had left appeared to become absolutely impassable. We turned up a spur to the left, and here we had to drag the horses up bare rock, the wise beasts coming along and making no fuss, and at last we came to a place where no four-footed beast with shoes might go, where, indeed, only a mountaineer could have climbed down. There was nothing for it but a return to the horrid gully, and from the height whereon we stood it seemed almost unattainable. My one wish was to get away from these dreadful hills and to get back to the inn, for it was eight o'clock, and we were not half-way over.



A CORNER OF HWEA LAKE.

The sudden dark fell as we rode, and we had to trust the horses to get us back, which they did about 10 p.m.

Everyone was in bed ; we turned the horses loose, and then tapped at the window, and soon the kind couple were fussing about, getting us supper and explaining we should *not* have turned down Dead Man's Gully at all, but climbed the steep hills to the left and kept high all the time.

Next day we started by nine, and this time gained the summit of the range. It was very steep, so steep we had to climb beside the horses or even behind them ; but what a view broke upon us from the top. Before us lay two arms of Lake Wanaka, embracing as it were a group of craggy mountains patched with snow ; it was the deepest blue I have ever seen in water—ultramarine, with a dash of indigo. From the end of one arm issued a blue river, the Clutha, which wound in great loops and curves through brown plains of terrace formations, which descend from Lake Hawea in a succession of giant steps. They were dotted over with homesteads and cornfields and brilliant green oases. But we had to get down to the plains, and it looked as if we could jump from the crest where we were, it was so steep ! At last we selected a spur. No English horse would go surely where those good beasts of ours hauled themselves up and let themselves down ! It was all loose, broken stone and rock ; a little dry thorn and thistles grew in places, and the sun beat fiercely from a cloudless

sky, making the hillside a furnace. It was very slow work, but we got to the bottom without mishap, just where there had been a settler's home-stead. It was deserted, fallen to ruin ; but there were gooseberries in the garden, and we added a supply to our lunch, and we ate it under some poplars, which gave a scanty shade. The lunch was scanty too. We had only some chocolate and the gooseberries (in an old bucket), and we sat with the bucket between us and enjoyed a refreshing, if frugal, meal !

And now came the final stage of the journey, Down to the purple-blue Clutha, across it in a stage-ferry, up the rise beyond on to a table-land with mountains nearly all round it, and some forty miles off, the Aspiring Range—the goal of our ambitions. There were the snow-fields and the high black peaks between the glaciers ; clouds drifted round them, now hiding them, then rolling off till they stood out clear against the blue.

The plain around us was strangely brown and bare ; a few sheep scattered over it, and the great brown hawks sailing overhead, the only signs of life. We had got into a world of rocky crags and jagged mountains, and the golden tussock was left behind. It was good-going on the road inches deep in brown dust, and we cantered fast, and passed several small settlements among their poplars and willows, and then came on a white, sandy road which led us through green and shady clumps of trees into the little town of Pembroke.

We stopped on the rise above the lake. The scene was perfectly lovely: that wonderful blue sheet of water, stretching away and away thirty miles and more among mountains of a still tenderer tone of blue. How grandly they grouped themselves all round, how gloriously white the snows shone, but, above all, what a study in blues was that first view of Wanaka.

We rode up to a charming hotel with wide verandahs and a big fruit-garden about it, producing every variety of European fruit—a land of plenty indeed. I went inside, while Transome saw to the horses, and found a quaint, rambling old house, with all sorts of annexes running out into the garden, with glass doors in lieu of windows opening directly on to lawns and fruit trees. The pleasant-faced girl who came to me said they were quite full, but we could have the bathrooms!

I questioned could they spare them, and was assured in such weather most people bathed in the lake—at any rate we could go no further, and so it was settled; we were only too glad to be taken in at all.

Very soon we made our way to the lake-shore, where the water rippled on a beach of fine white pebbles, deepening four yards out sufficiently to float the small steamer that plies on the lake. The water was absolutely clear, and as we swam about we could look down through the cool, green depths to every stone on the bottom.

The hotel was excellent; full as it was, we were

all attended to and made welcome ; the delicious trout alone would have made an excellent dinner, but in addition there was turkey and black-currant pie—we made up our minds to spend a day or two here before we started on our further journey. Besides, we had to seek some kind of buggy to convey our stuff to camp. We found all had come safely, and awaited us in the hotel store.

Next day we rode out seventeen miles to try to get information as to the whereabouts of a hut, which we heard lay some thirty miles up the Matukituki valley. Of information we got little or none, and decided we must push on to a settler's *en route*, who was reported as having been further up than anyone in Pembroke. This was Mr. Ross, and when we returned to the hotel we found he had been to see us, and left a pressing invitation to call at his house and lunch there on our way.

CHAPTER III.

THE BERLINE.

When Clancy took the drover's track
In years of long ago,
He drifted to the Outer-back
Beyond the Overflow ;
By rolling plain and rocky shelf,
With stock-whip in his hand,
He reached at last, Oh lucky elf,
The town of Come-and-help-yourself
In Rough-and-Ready Land.

B. PATERSON.

NEXT day the hotel handy-man came to tell us there was a buggy we might hire, with collars and traces, for the magnificent sum of five shillings, for as long a period as we liked. We went to look at it forthwith.

Indeed it was a curiosity, quite the earliest type of buggy, and made me think somehow of Alice's rocking-horse fly, with its small body hung between immense spidery wheels. The paint had long ago become a uniform brownish-red, and bolts and screws were very frail ; but it would hold our stores, and the handy-man assured us of its strength and endurance, so we struck the bargain, and promptly christened it the "Berline"—not that our exploring expedition at all resembled the flight from Paris, or this very ancient buggy the brand-new Korff-Berline !

Next thing to be done was to pack on the stores, at which five men, a boy, and several children

assisted. A bag of horse-feed was roped on behind, the saddles on top, and the packages stowed below the seat ; and bags and sticks and other goods tucked in somehow, and we mounted on top of all.

By this time most of the inhabitants had come into the hotel yard to see the start. I took the reins, the horses strained at their collars, the Berline groaned, the children whooped, the crowd cheered, and we were off ! Once down to the level of the lake, the horses dashed off right merrily : up and down, in and out of ruts and streams, till we gained some higher ground where the road followed the curves of the many bays—each one, it seemed to us, more lovely than the last.

Sometimes a rough pasture sloped to the white beach, its surface starred with white gentians and pink centaurea ; sometimes the rocks jutted into the blue water in miniature capes and islets, and beautiful clumps of the giant flax, *Phormium tenax*, or the tall, pampas-like toe-toe grass* with its drooping plumes, lined the shore. A little farther a group of manuka † scented all the air with its long sprays of white flowers, growing beside tree-veronicas in full bloom. We passed little homesteads nestling among familiar English poplars and fir trees—beloved of the settlers for their rapid growth—with gay gardens full of the old familiar flowers, asters and sweet peas and stocks. And beyond these we drove along a cutting in the face of a cliff, where we looked over into twenty

* *Leptospermum scoparium*. † *Arundo conspicua*.

THE BERLINE LEAVING PEMBROKE.



feet of water, so absolutely clear every ancient tree trunk and rock was visible on the sandy bottom. And the farther views kept changing, and the lake widening and reaching away into far blue distances, thirty miles and more to the northward.

Then the scene changed, and we were driving between rugged hills covered for the most part with greenery ; away from the lake and across a little flat to where stark, black mountains, patched with snow and seamed with waterfalls, reared up. These were the outliers of a range that runs up the Matukituki valley, but does not join the Mount Aspiring group, whither we were bent.

To our right a plain was gradually unfolding, with hay crops and standing corn just beginning to ripen, and some miles off the homestead of Russell's Flat lay half-hidden in its willow and poplar trees. Beyond all this the wide river-bed stretched between enclosing hills for seventeen miles, and the farther view ended in the outer walls and bastions of Mount Aspiring, its snows and glaciers interrupted by patches of black crags and precipices, which, even at this distance, looked awful.

It is not a single lonely peak, but a group of mountains cut into on the east and west by the deep gorges of the two Matukituki rivers. This was our first near view (though still twenty miles off) we had had of our mountain, and somewhere up there lay the wondrous Ice-caves and the Silver Cone we sought.

We lunched with Mrs. Ross, who feasted us most royally and supplied one or two wants in our equipment—we had forgotten to buy a bucket, and she gave us the inevitable kerosene tin with a wire handle, a bottle of milk, and a jar of cream—and we set forth, but not before Mr. Ross had given us his parting instruction: “ You won’t find much of a road—it’s mostly washed away, and the bridges over the creeks are not always to be depended on ; ten miles up you come to the Niger Hut : take my advice and sleep there. This heat will melt the snows and bring down a flood, and the river goes down at night. The ford is a mile or two further on than the hut, and you must make your camp at the Old Home-stead—a couple of miles along the far side of the river.”

I think in all that summer of perfect weather, no day stands out in my memory more fair than the day we drove up the Matukituki valley. Sunshine blazed over everything, larks sang as even at home they hardly know how to sing ; soft breezes rippled the blue reaches of water that stretched among the sand and stones of the wide river-bed ; and, as we went, our spirits overflowed in bursts of laughter and jokes about our ramshackle old chariot.

We started gaily down a grassy track—no longer a made road, for nobody lives beyond the flat except one old Highlander and his family. The saw-mills that once made a busy little

settlement were ruined by disastrous forest fires, and the only other settler was drowned. The way became very rough, and the Berline groaned and creaked as we bumped, now over a dry water-course, then across a swamp, where it threatened either to part with its wheels or to remain, but a violent jerk from the horses freed it. Presently high grass completely hid the track, and we could only guess at it, and carefully avoid a series of exquisitely blue, but treacherous little peat tarns, where the paradise ducks and pukaki, or "swamp hens," were busy.

The mountains on each side of us rose 2,000 to 3,000 feet, sloping steeply to the river, and patched with dark bush and the brilliant green of young bracken, and the valley itself varied from one to three miles in width. Plenty of long grass grew by the river margins, where fine cattle were feeding. We wondered why so fair and fertile a land was utterly uninhabited. In all our wanderings I never enjoyed a drive so much. The air was so exhilarating, the sunshine so glorious, and the goal in front so alluring ; everything thus far had gone well, too, and no thought of failure or disaster crossed our minds.

And so the long sunny day wore on, and the lights and shades on the snows ahead changed, and crept higher and higher as the sun moved westward, and at five o'clock we saw the Niger Hut perched on a slope of grassy hillside, the track winding down to it through a cutting.

Transome inspected it, and then invited me to look in. One look was enough, and in that I had a vision more of a cowshed than a habitation for tired travellers ! The chimney had fallen, daylight streamed across the dirty floor from a gaping hole—even the window-frame of the inner room had been broken up for fuel, and the glass in the other had fallen out.

I came back and urged we should cross the ford to the Old Homestead, and not unpack in such a place. Very reluctantly Transome consented, and we bumped down over rough stones and shingle, among rabbit-holes and flax stumps, to the river. We searched carefully till we found some old wheel ruts, and following them, crossed without difficulty a stretch of gravel and two shallow arms of the river, and then we came to the main stream. Crossing these smiling, shallow waters and yellow-grey ribbed sand had presented no difficulties at all ! Could anything be easier ?

The sun was fast drawing down behind a great barrier of purple rock ; the glacier, hanging to its crest somewhat in the shadow, looked coldly remote and pure ; the wide river-bed and sheltering hills were bathed in a flood of golden light ; the heavy bush, clothing those more distant with a dark mantle, concealed their precipitous slopes and deep ravines. The spell of absolute stillness lay over all. Not a sound but a little murmur of the river over its shingly reaches. Around us was a wilderness of stones and bleached tree-trunks,

carried down in flood-time, and here and there an oasis where some scrub and grass made shift to grow. In front of us was the pale blue hurrying tide, milky from the melted snows, swirling silently past, "too full for sound or foam."

"Better give it up, and cross in the morning," says Transome, and I answer: "I don't want to sleep in that hut, and I'm sure it's not half so dangerous as a West Coast river"—and, with a little more urging, Transome agreed to try the depth by riding one of the horses over. He found the track on the far side, which assured us we were at the crossing-place, for the ford was so wide it was impossible to see any track from where I was. The water was up to the horse's chest, and measuring this against the floor of the Berline, we foresaw our precious stores would be wet, and we decided to make the passage in two journeys, carrying them over on the seat. So the bulkiest sack and one of the saddles were removed, and Transome drove the horses into the flood, I watching from the shore.

They had not gone far into deep water when I saw something was wrong: the Scorpion was standing away from the pole, and trying to turn round. What happened next was so rapid I could scarcely follow it; for a moment the Berline whirled one wheel wildly in the air, and threatened to over-turn, but swung round instead, and then everything was in confusion! Three traces were floating loose, washed from their fastenings by the current. The Scorpion somehow had come to the

same side as Tom, and was sheltering herself against him ; and they were facing my side of the stream, and only attached by the one trace and the pole-straps ! Fortunately, they were standing quite quietly. By a dexterous twist of her head the Scorpion now freed herself from her collar, so that, except for the reins tangled up with the rest of the harness, she was free. What was one poor man unaided to do in such extremities ? He did the only thing possible—climbed out on the submerged pole and got astride the Scorpion, and began to worry at that tangle of harness—the water surging all the time against the wreck, and threatening to sweep it all away. At last he fished up the collar, and patiently worked at the wet buckles till both horses were freed ; though for some time it seemed as if the tangle never could come undone without being cut, and one trace got washed away in the process. He rode ashore, bearing the collar and remains of the traces—a sorry sight—and left the shipwrecked Berline lying mid-stream, but now settled-down comfortably, and no longer waving a distressed wheel as at the first.

I was crushed—it was all my fault, and the most precious of our stuff was lying out there at the mercy of the capricious Matukituki !

To save what we could was the next consideration, and this was no easy matter in that wild swirl of waters. The remaining saddle was put on the Scorpion, and she was with some difficulty



OUR NIGHT'S QUARTERS IN THE NIGER HUT.

induced to approach the derelict, where she stood breast-deep, while Transome climbed on board and brought off my pack and the knapsacks.

The next journey he brought the groceries in safety, but the saddle-bags, alas ! fell in and were rescued with difficulty, and my supply of stamps and stationery suffered. I urged him to leave the rest—the river would fall at least two feet in the night, and no doubt was at its highest now. He was tired and we were both discouraged, but he persisted in another journey, though the mare was shivering from the snow-water. This time he tried to rescue two paper parcels, one containing a large cake and the other a roll of bacon, and they both fell in. Grabbing at the most precious (the bacon, as he thought) he clutched the cake, and the bacon went sailing back to Wanaka ! Much as I felt the loss, just then my desire was to get somewhere—even to the hut—for the night.

It was not yet dark, but the light was growing less every minute, and the rest of our stuff must be left to its fate. We put what we could upon the horses, and, with our hands full of the smaller packages, we started back, fording the two smaller branches, and stopping constantly to pick up the things that jolted off. It was a forlorn-looking pair that dragged themselves and their horses through the long grass, over two creeks, and up to the dilapidated old hut—and with but scant hopes of any comfort to be found therein.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NIGER HUT

It stands upon the grassy slope,
A ruin, brown and lone ;
The door swings on its hinge of rope
With strange and dismal tone,
Whene'er the wandering winds that pass,
Bear with them, o'er the thistled grass,
The darksome forest's moan.

H. L. TWISTLETON.

IT was indeed a sorry place to spend a night, but I was thankful to get there ! We turned the horses loose, and proceeded to light a fire : the chimney would not draw—not, indeed, to be wondered at, for after all it was only a hole, and all the smoke came inside. Then we found there was no tea, that being in one of the abandoned sacks. All we could do was to mix some cream and hot water, and this, with a hunch of bread and butter, constituted our supper. I took the wet wrappings off the cake : it was a ruin, reduced to a mere pudding—and we left it for the next party of rabbiters. At first we thought of Transome riding back for help, but it was now 10 p.m. and he was tired out, and we were both depressed over this tragic ending to a perfect day. So we decided that he should go early next morning, and then turned our thoughts to making ourselves as comfortable as might be for the night.



SUBMERGED.

We found some dry litter ; and once upon a time there had been two bunks there, but most of the slats had been used for firewood by the rabbiters. Transome settled himself on the floor in his bag, and was asleep in a few minutes ; fortunately the sleeping-bags and rugs were dry. I collected some slats lying about, and repaired one bunk, which stood just below the frameless window-opening.

And now a new cause of disquietude presented itself. All the cattle on the flat had collected round the hut in a wild state of excitement, and their appetite for dry goods seemed insatiable. So harness and everything had to be brought inside—and I just rescued my towel and bathing-dress from a hungry cow ; nor would the door keep shut, and a moist nose was constantly pushed in, to be withdrawn in haste after receiving a sounding slap with a stick. Time after time I drove them away, only to find in five minutes the herd was ramping round again—especially one white heifer, which seemed determined to evict us, and tossed her long horns angrily when I sallied out. I lay down on the improvised bunk, but the moment I moved, bang ! out fell the bottom ! then peace reigned for a little ; then the cows came back, wandering round and round, trying to get in, and seizing whatever they could find—and my uneasy slumbers were constantly interrupted. Transome seemed to sleep through it all, and at last, towards morning, I too fell into a sound slumber. But gradually there grew upon me

the consciousness of something wrong—reluctantly I opened my eyes, and a startling apparition nearly took away my breath: framed by the window against the background of star-lit sky, was a huge, red head with branching horns—a long tongue was in the very act of sweeping up my blanket—the cold muzzle and heavy breath were close against my face. I gave a scream and sat up with a start, and, of course, at that critical point the bottom fell out of the bed again! The enemy hurriedly withdrew his head and made off. The clatter wakened Transome, who drowsily murmured: “What’s the matter now?” and went to sleep again; but I got no more that night.

At 3.30 I got up, and having raked the embers together, was thankful to find the breeze had dropped, and we could have a fire; but all the breakfast I could offer was a little cream and hot water, and some bread. Then I caught Tom (being the faster horse of the two) and tied him ready at the door, and stood for a few minutes looking out.

The sky was very clear, and a cold white light was coming up behind the eastern mountains. It was all so still. The cattle had wandered far away down the river-bed, and I could hear the river making a soft singing to itself—except for an early lark, no other sound broke the utter peace.

I was all alone in this strange, half-enchanted world. The snows on Mount Aspiring looked grey and uncanny in the dusk, but every moment the light was growing. And then the sun rose behind



the dark hills, the snows flushed and faded—the world looked up with a smile of sparkling dewdrops, and a little breeze gently swayed the tall plumes of toe-toe and the flax blades. At 4.30 I awoke Transome, and he started for the homestead. Tom cantered and galloped on a loose rein all the way, and covered the ten miles in less than an hour on none too good a track. Great was the excitement and amusement at the homestead ! but they gave the “shipwrecked” man a good breakfast, and Mr. Ross, leaving his hay, rode back with him, armed with three fresh traces and a stout rope.

Meantime, having packed all in readiness, at six o’clock I went down to the scene of the disaster. There lay the Berline quite unharmed ; the waters had abated a full foot from its bottom boards ; peaceful and blue the river rippled under and around it, and our forsaken goods lay in a heap untouched where we had left them last night. I returned to the hut, and fell asleep ; but it was a long morning, and about ten I was thankful to see two horsemen come over the rise, and was soon welcoming Mr. Ross, who seemed to think the whole thing a tremendous joke.

They rested the horses for an hour, then loading two of them (I riding the third) we conveyed all our stuff back to the river. When we came to the ford, Mr. Ross waded in and tied a rope to the fore-part of the Berline, and amid much laughing, it was hauled out, while I photographed them at various stages. A few minutes more and the load

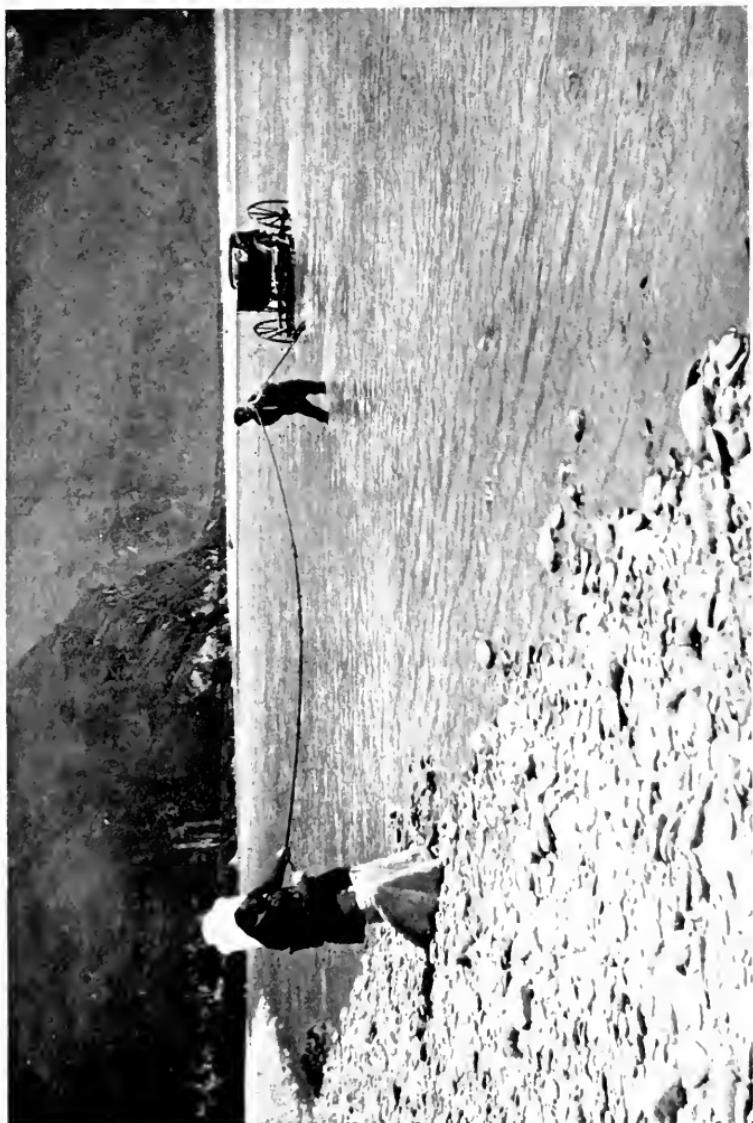
was adjusted, the two men on the top and I in front on the third horse—we once more got under weigh, with many a groan from the old Berline.

We were almost in mid-stream, when, looking back, to my dismay I saw it was once more in difficulties—a trace was undone, and the horses, expecting the same performance as yesterday, were refusing and getting out of hand, but they had two to reckon with this time. In a trice Mr. Ross was on the Scorpion's back, caught and fastened the trace, and turned their heads once more across stream ; his own wise horse pretending to pull in front gave them confidence, and the Berline emerged on a shingle flat with no further mishaps.

The rest was easy. Two broad but shallow streams were crossed ; then we got on a green flat on the far-side of the eastern Matukituki, and found it full of ambushments, old trenches, rabbit-holes, and other fruitful sources of disaster. At times the Berline threatened dissolution altogether. However, we were within sight of our new abode, and with expiring creaks and groans from its much-tried springs, we drew up in front of the door—and the perilous journey was over.

The Old Homestead stood on a little rise, under a group of dark, native trees. Immediately behind the paddocks at the back, the mountain rose in almost precipitous slopes, covered with trees, broken rock, and bracken—the last few hundred feet a series of step-like precipices. Deep ravines hid tumbling waterfalls in their dark depths—the

THE BIRLINE IS TOWED ASHORE.



noise of water came from all sides. But if the mountains were savagely grand, the outlook up the valley was just the opposite.

A smiling stretch of waving pasture between forest-covered slopes, and the blue river—at one point foaming over rapids, and at another sweeping still and deep beneath over-hanging trees ; farther up, the scene was closed by the snow-peaks and purple-black crags of more distant ranges.

CHAPTER V.

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

And the bush hath friends to meet him,
And their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes and the river
 on its bars,
And he sees the vision splendid
Of the sun-lit plains extended,
And at night the wondrous glory of the
 everlasting stars.

A. B. PATERSON.

WE pushed open the door and inspected our quarters, and after my night in the Niger I was not so hard to please, and quite ready to think them all they should be. At any rate, doors and windows were fairly intact—the chimney, it is true, left something to be desired ; the last party of rabbiters had repaired the holes with old sacking and grass, with the result that when we lighted a fire we nearly set the cottage in a blaze ! The men rushed and tore down the burning stuff and filled up the holes with some old tins and sods, and I stood with the kerosene tin full of water ready to help.

After this I hurriedly unpacked something for lunch, as Mr. Ross wanted to go back ere the ford got too deep, and we sat down in cheerful spirits to herrings and tomato, tongue, bread and butter, and tea ; after which he set out homewards, and we turned our attention to settling in.

The front room was a good-sized one, with the usual wide hearth, and hooks to hang one's billies and kettle (if we had one); there was a bench and table, a dresser, and a broken chair. The inner room had a family bedstead of ample proportions—just a big box on four legs with a sacking-and-grass mattress, and a small table—and that was all. The walls were festooned with ancient picture-papers of the seventies, hanging mice-nibbled and yellow, and the whole place wanted a good clean out. All the implements for this purpose were an old stump of a whisk and a small scrub-brush, but there was plenty of water, so that with the help of an ancient shovel-head, the whisk-stump, and kerosene tin, I soon got rid of the dirt. Transome smoked his pipe and looked on (as he could not help), but gave much valuable advice on the proper way to use a broom, which he demonstrated for my benefit—but we laughed so much, he went off to arrange his sleeping-quarters. Next I unpacked and arranged the stores, and hung our not-wanted clothes on pegs in the inner room, and then Transome called me to see his sleeping arrangements.

I went round the end of the cottage and found the Berline converted into a four-post bed, as it were. Under it, on a layer of springy beech and fern, was the sleeping-bag, a grey rug neatly folded, and over the pillow a square of mosquito netting. He had elected to sleep out of doors, and was highly pleased with his arrangements.

“I think,” he said, “this is a very healthy mode of sleeping.”

Outside our door was a long table or wide bench, I don’t know which, and here we decided to take all our meals. The plateau on which the cottage stood sloped off on three sides to the river-flat, and below us lay the old stock-yard and cattle-sheds, fast falling into ruin, the ten-foot fences mostly broken down, and all round them the remains of fenced paddocks. But the wandering cattle had broken into every place, and the garden was marked by one poor apple tree, and a few gooseberry bushes smothered in rank grass and fern. Yet it is not so long since this was a home, and its last inmate, we heard, had died but a short time back—but not here. There was a tragedy connected with the Old Homestead, and maybe it accounts for it being still untenanted. In the old days of the saw-mill a Highlander wandered up this far valley, and after the fire that eventually drove the saw-millers away, he remained behind and built himself a little homestead, and lived here with his wife. He had no neighbours except the family still living up the west Matukituki, and was cut off even from them because of a quarrel that lasted several years—indeed, it was not healed till after the tragedy. As time went on, Sandy (I shall call him) became more and more addicted to the whisky bottle, and so lazy that all the work on the bit of land and the garden was done by his active wife—Sandy contented himself with the

periodical visits to Pembroke to buy stores and sell cattle. He used to take the two horses and the dray, and he always brought a supply of whisky back with him ; as long as he was sober there was no great danger, for the track in those days was much better than it is now, and the horses knew every foot of the way. But there came a time of protracted storms and heavy rains, and the river, as these rivers do, made new channels for itself : and in one place the track was washed away, and Sandy found himself obliged to make a new one to avoid a deep wash-out. One night he left Pembroke much later than he should, and badly under the influence of the whisky—a supply of which he also carried in the dray. As he passed Russell's Flat some men who saw him shook their heads and said : “ Sandy's not fit to drive the horses ; something'll happen one of these days.” At last he lost all idea of where he was—took off his boots and went to bed in the cart. The two old horses plodded on in the gathering darkness, taking the old, accustomed way. Sandy, comfortably asleep, had dropped the reins—and then the inevitable happened, for they all went over the steep edge of the wash-out into deep water: the dray turned over on top of Sandy, who was drowned in his sleep, and one horse, tangled in the chains, was drowned too. The other stood all night in the icy water : and thus they found them when the men at the Flat, getting uneasy, set out to follow him. It was their only neighbour who was commissioned to go

on ahead and break the news to the waiting wife. One wondered how she took it—whether it was after all a relief, when what she had foretold and expected actually came to pass? She utterly refused to leave the place, and set to work on her own account ; and here for years she might have been seen in Sandy's trousers and long boots, pursuing her industry as a farmer.

Were not “Sandy's 'kye' to mind”—and who was going to look after things if she didn't? Thus she grew old ; several times the Old Homestead was nearly burnt down, and eventually her relatives carried her off to civilization on the plains; but though she gave in to them the lonely woman could not get back into civilized ways. “She was aye thinkin' about the kye,” and she laid her down and died one day : and the long journey came to an end, and peace was at the last. They said she had but one idea of late years ; and if anyone called at her house, but one question was ever asked : “Did ye see the kye as ye come along ? ”

We were not troubled that night with thoughts of Sandy—we slept sound in our sea-green bags. Next morning what a glory of freshness and beauty met me as, very early, I opened the door on a world all blue and silver, the sun just rising over the edge of the dark forest opposite, the river singing a merry song over its shingly shallows, and the green flat sparkling with its dewdrops.

I could see the horses a long way up the valley grazing contentedly. A flock of terns was wheeling and darting over the river-bed, and Transome, a towel round his shoulders, was just starting for his bathe. I called to him to bring me up the bucket of fresh water, and set off to my own bathing-place —a delightful rock-pool in the waterfall that came down close to the homestead.

The bell-birds and the tuis were calling, and some paradise ducks were winging their way upstream, uttering their plaintive cries. As I came back I saw a bush falcon in the beech before the door, dusky-black when he spread his wings, but speckled like a thrush below. He had evidently been annoying the terns, who were screaming and wheeling over the tree.

I think that first breakfast was the most delicious I ever ate, though I cooked it myself, and the salmon steaks were tinned ! We sat in the sunshine at the door. Plates were so scarce, the billy-lid was used for an extra, and we had but one knife each for all purposes—but never did fried salmon and potatoes taste sweeter. The fly in the ointment was the abominable sand-flies, which proved a veritable nuisance. We discussed our plans : where the Ice-caves lay, and up which valley we must seek for the Silver Cone ; and we decided the very first step must be a visit to our neighbours in the west valley, to arrange with them for supplies of such necessities as our stores could not provide. Then I washed up, and looked with

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swelling pride on my plates, two mugs, a jug, and various tins on the dresser. Transome went after the horses, and before I had finished tidying up he was calling for me ; and I saw them brought round saddled to the door.



"THE GATE OF DEATH."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHIELING ON THE MATUKITUKI.

“ From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and a waste of seas,
Yet still the blood is warm, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.”

ROUND the foot of the mountains winds a track, which, if it were not for the rabbit-holes, might be thought a fairly good one in these parts. As it is, it is extremely perilous ; and the fresh green of the flat is also full of bog-holes, and beyond the grass is the stony river-bed with its bright blue streams hurrying along, breaking into foam at the rapids and shallows.

Leaving our own sunny valley, we rode up the track to the junction where the western Matukituki issues from its gorge. It was a forbidding, desolate place ; great bare mountains ran up in rocky pinnacles and serrated edges on either side. The bush, along the base, had been swept by some forest fire, leaving only a few scattered groups of beech. Though the sunshine was flooding over everything and the sky cloudless, the entrance to that gorge always to me had the same dread look, and a sentence kept running in my head : “ Through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection.”

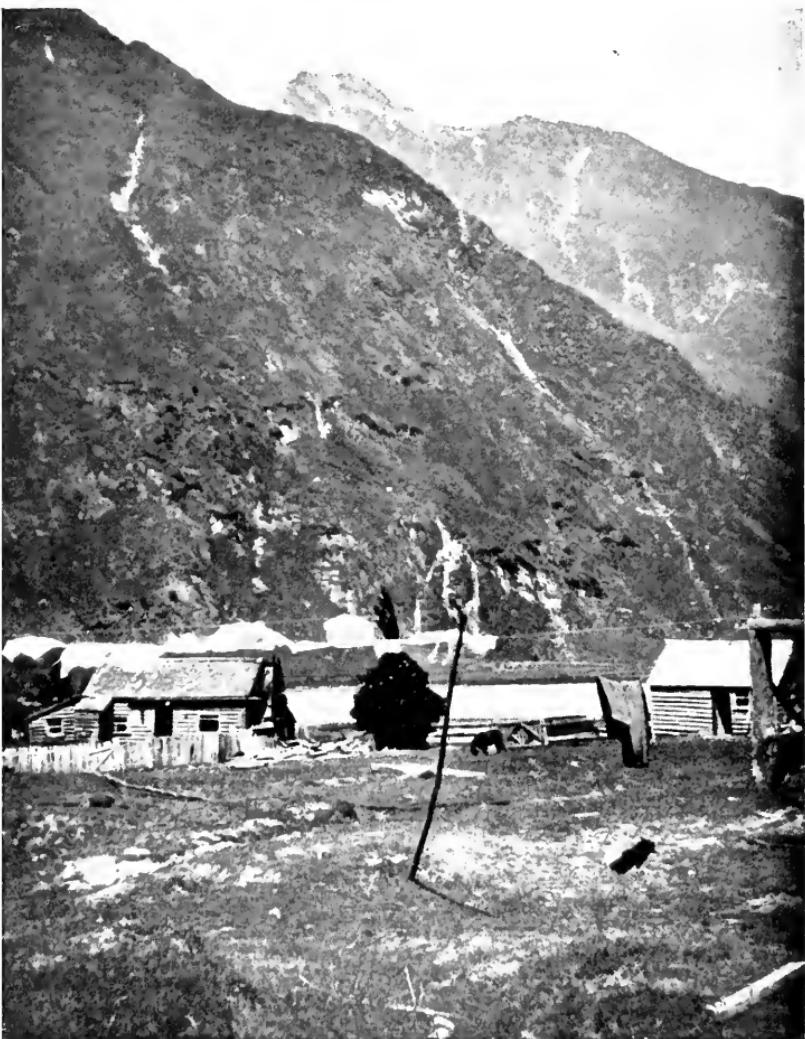
The ground, too, was stony and barren, and cut up by torrents that tear their way from the mountains ; and in many places tumbled boulders and tree-trunks gave us plenty to do to get the horses over. It was better in the river-bed, and we rode them through a ford breast deep, and continued along a shingle-spit for a time ; and then we saw signs of cultivation—tiny enclosures of starved oats and hay, a potato patch, and then a bit of road, leading past an old byre and a yard, to a little cottage on a green slope.

It might, indeed, have been a Highland crofter's home—only built of boards instead of stone. A room had been added as it was wanted to the end, but the orginal dwelling, with its little green porch and window to one side, was just as when Mr. Macpherson built it for his wife ; and here they have lived for nine years, and the children know no other home.

A path led up to the door through a plot enclosed by a rude fence, and a few flowers showed an attempt at a garden ; and a little higher up the hill was another enclosure with currants and gooseberries.

Just here the mountains fell back, so that the western sun shone always full on the cottage ; the river made a wide loop, partly encircling the rough ground about the house, which was covered with short, green grass.

Dismounting, I went up to the door and knocked. Great was the astonishment of the lady who opened to me ! A visitor was so rare an event



THE LONE SHIELING.

that the four children flocked round, staring with all their eyes, but my welcome was of the heartiest. Mrs. Macpherson seized my hand and drew me forcibly into the room, as though she thought I might vanish if she did not hold me fast. She set the children to wash up and prepare tea and scones for us, and while she rocked her seven-weeks-old baby, talked to me and to the children sixteen to the dozen !

At length I was able to explain to her what we wanted. Yes, bread and butter, milk and cream, she could give in plenty—meat they rarely had, and the hens were not doing well ; but she would save all the eggs for us during our stay. The little boy ran out and brought in four, just new laid. He was a solemn little man, but his sisters were rosy-faced, pleasant little lasses, always laughing, and already able to do most of the work for their mother—“and milk, too,” as she told me with pride. Her husband works for Government at road-making, and is often away a fortnight or more at a time ; and these children, the eldest only twelve, with their mother, did all the work of the farm.

Mrs. Macpherson explained to me she was growing deaf, and “Macpherson” was worse. “It’s the roaring of the creeks,” she said ; “sometimes I think I’ll go mad, and I know I’m going deaf. I’ve stood there by the door on a spring morning when the snows are melting, and I’ve counted forty waterfalls, and the roar of them

and the roar of the avalanches is enough to send a woman out of her mind ! and then, it is that lonely, too—Oh, you don't know what it is to see another face up here besides your children's ! It's sometimes eighteen months, and once it was two full years, before I saw the face of living woman ; you must come and see me whenever you can."

I promised her I would, and then, Transome coming in, we had tea, and learned that her husband would be home next week, and, she was sure, would act guide for us.

The children waited on us, not in the least shy, though inclined to go off in explosions of merriment at anything we said to them. Their mother begged us to excuse them, for, as she said, they never saw anyone but their dad from year's end to year's end. I was greatly interested in the account of their school-keeping. Not alone did she look after husband, children, and cows—of which they had a large number—but she taught the three eldest children as well, and for this the Government gives a grant of five pounds per head, there being no school nearer than Pembroke, thirty miles away. When they went to be examined this year with the other school children, she was unable to go on account of her baby ; but the inspector gave her great praise, and they were found to be quite as well taught as children of their age at school.

"Only," she said, "he sent word : 'their manners must be seen to '—to think of that now ! and it was

all because they just smiled up and talked to him same as if it was their dad ! I could have cried with vexation."

I looked at the copy-books and drawing-books, and found the elder children could read quite nicely ; and I conceived a tremendous respect for this lonely woman without a soul to encourage or help her ; who goes on cheerfully doing the work of mother, teacher, farmer, and housekeeper combined.

Many a difficulty has to be faced, and not least the want of water in winter, when the waterfalls are solid ice, and icicles fifteen feet long hang from the rocks ; and the only water is melted snow, or that which they fetch from the main river.

"It's a beautiful sight," said Mrs. Macpherson, "in winter, when everything is white, and the blue shadows lie on the snow ; but the sun gets above the mountains for only two hours and a half in mid-winter, and there's a long time of darkness."

Once the chimney caught fire, and they were all running this way and that with the buckets to find water to put it out ; they thought the house would be burnt : "and Macpherson got on a ladder, and the whole thing fell down with him. But, praise God, he wasn't hurt, and we just stood and laughed," said cheerful Mrs. Macpherson ; "we could not help it ! and we couldn't have a fire till he could fix up the chimney again."

One point she always came back to : the river. It was an enemy—something to be dreaded and

feared. “ I never see Macpherson go, but I pray he may come back safe ; and when I’m expecting him, I’m out there on the point every minute watching till I see his horse come over the creek. And the creeks are nearly as bad. I had another little girl, and once when the floods were coming, down she ran after her father, and her foot slipped on the plank over the creek, and she was carried away ! Her father’s deaf, and he never heard her cry ; and we found her when the creek went down.”

The tears were in her eyes, and I felt how ill she could spare one out of her little flock. Her husband made a sad journey with his little one, to bury her in consecrated ground, but the mother stayed behind with the other children.

“ Why,” she went on, “ only this summer, when baby was born, I had someone come up to be with me, and it was five weeks before the river let her get away again ! ”

“ And when the children are ill, do you see a doctor ? ” I asked.

“ Doctor ! there’s never been a doctor here ! It’s not so long since I thought I had lost her there ” —pointing to a little fair girl of three. “ Her father was away ; there was no one but myself and the children here ; and she was the baby then. She had been eating the matches when my back was turned, and I was just distracted to know what to do—leaving the house and all, and only the three children, and them babies, you might say, to take care of it.

“ She was a big, heavy child, and I set off with her on my knees to ride to Pembroke—one of the little girls handed her up to me when I was in the saddle—and I got across the river ; but the horse fidgeted, and I got down to shift the saddle, for I thought it was hurting it, and then I could not mount again with the sick child in my arms. Evening was drawing on, and there was seventeen miles to go through bog and creek, and I carried her every step of the way, and the horse dragging on the bridle, for it wanted to get back. I thought she was dying when I got to Russell’s Flat—they wanted me to stop, but I cried to go on, and they brought me a cup of tea ; but I was too wild to drink it, and kept begging them to hurry—so they put a horse in the buggy, and drove me the rest of the way.

“ The doctor looked very grave, and said I must leave the child for a week with him ; but I had to stay and nurse her, and all the time I was thinking the other three would be drowned or the house burnt before Macpherson would get back, for I got word sent to him to go home. She got well in a week’s time. Everyone was good to us in Pembroke ; if it hadn’t been for my worrying, I could have enjoyed it. Mr. Ross drove us all the way home, and when I got back the place was clean and tidy, and the scones baking on the fire, and the children well. I was a thankful woman that night ! ”

We had finished tea, and, while she talked, Mrs.

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Macpherson had packed up milk, cream, scones, eggs, and butter ; and we said good-bye to her and rode away, considerably enlightened as to the other side of life on the Matukituki. “ The Gate of Death ” looked very grim and awful, but beyond it the mellow sunshine still lay on our valley, though the long shadows from the mountains had crept over its upper end. In a book of Australian verse I came across a poem one day by George Essex Evans, called “ The Woman of the West.” It is rather long to quote, but some of it seemed to me just to describe the mistress of the Lone Shieling, and the life there of one who had faced the wilderness :

“ In the slab-built, zinc-roofed homestead of some lately taken run,
In the tent beside the bankment of a railway just begun,
In the huts on new selections, in the camps of man’s unrest,
On the frontiers of the Nation, live the Women of the West.

“ The red sun robs their beauty, and in weariness and pain,
The slow years steal the nameless grace that never comes again ;
And there are hours men cannot soothe, and words men cannot
say—
The nearest woman’s face may be a hundred miles away.

“ The wide bush holds the secret of their longing and desires,
When the white stars in reverence light their holy altar fires,
And silence, like the touch of God, sinks deep into the breast—
Perchance he hears and understands the Women of the West.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROB ROY.

Drinking fresh odours, spiey wafts that blew,
We watched the glassy, quivering air asleep,
Midway between tall cliffs that taller grew
Above the unseen torrent calling deep !
Till, like a sword, cleaving the foliage through,
The waterfall flashed foaming down the steep,
White, living water, cooling with its spray
Dense plumes of fragile fern.

W. P. REEVES.

Two days later we made an expedition to find the Rob Roy glacier. Our way led us through the “Gate of Death,” past the Lone Shieling, and up the western Matukituki. It was but a poor sort of a path, among *débris* and boulders rolled down by the torrents that came from the mountains on our left. The river-bed was inaccessible, the water swirling along between jagged rocks ; but a few miles up it widened out into several streams, and we got across safely. We were now at the opening of a gorge, that looked as if the mountains had been cleft by some terrific force : on one side they rose black and precipitous, with trees clinging wherever they could find a little soil ; but generally they were sheer walls of rock. On our side the mountains were clothed to within a few hundred feet of the top with dense bush, out of which their summits rose in sharp, slatey

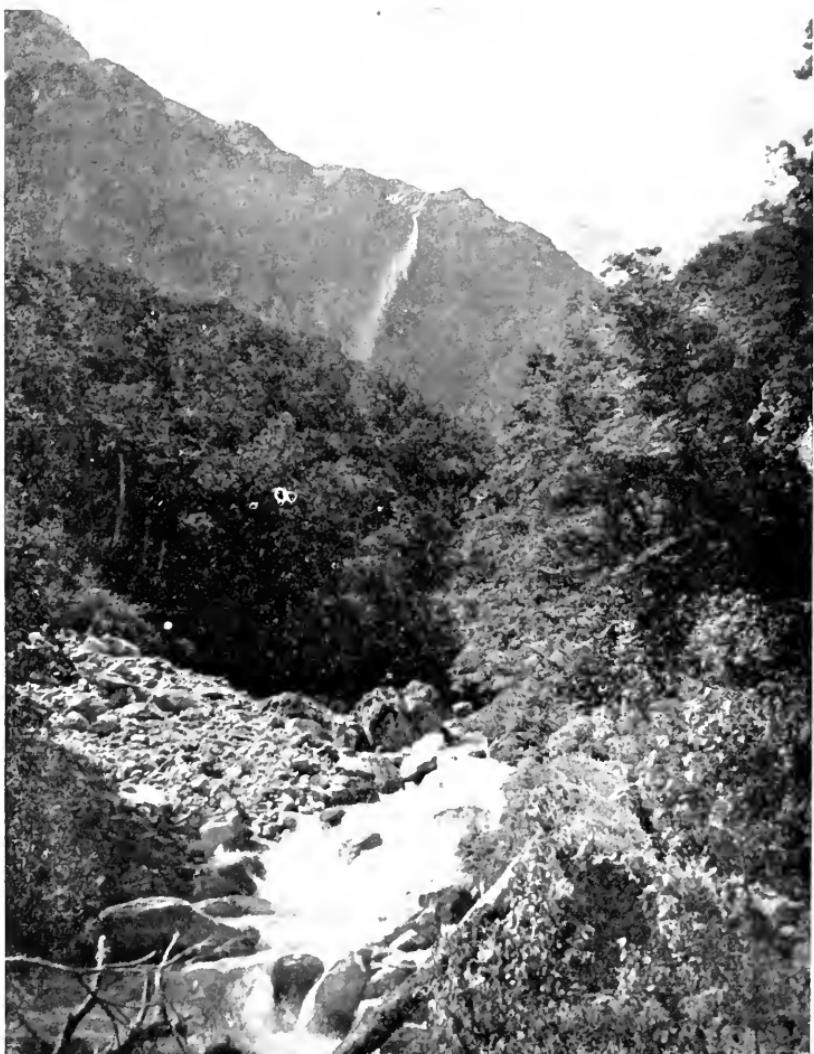
points and walls. From the very start we had hard work.

Leaving the horses tied below, we began a toilsome ascent through a belt of tutu*—a stout herb growing as high as our shoulders. This bit was very steep, followed by a belt of fern; then across screes of slate-shale and faces of bare rock, with only cracks for footholds, where we clung by our finger-tips. Slowly we worked our way up a deep gorge, the opposite mountains seeming only a few hundred feet away, and towering up five or six thousand feet. The heat grew greater every moment, and the glare from the rocks scorched us and made us terribly thirsty as we worked our way from gully to gully. Each one we climbed into we hoped would be the last; but they were interminable, and no water in any of them—each was a fresh disappointment.

We were obliged to keep high up because of the rank vegetation lower down, which really looked impenetrable. After a tedious climb, at last we saw the head of the gorge—a wonderful sight on which not many eyes have gazed. It is closed by a semi-circle of cliffs, precipitous and black; and wedged as it were between three mountain peaks, lies an enormous glacier.

Not a long river of ice, but a mighty mass of ice, breaking off sharp at the top of the stupendous cliffs, whose blackness contrasts strongly with its white surface and green edges. All day long in

* *Coriaria ruscifolia*.



THE ROB ROY GORGE: "THE WATER SCATTERED INTO SMOKE
AND DRIFTED ACROSS THE FACE OF THE ROCK LONG
BEFORE IT REACHED THE BOTTOM."

summer the avalanches plunge into an abyss, whose depth one could only guess at, but tons of falling ice were but white powder ere they vanished below. The roar of the avalanches was terrific, mingling as it did with the voice of many waters churning and hurling down from the cliff foot—we counted fifteen waterfalls, but there may have been as many more, pouring from the edge of the ice.

On one side of the main mass, a black precipice jutted out, and over it, in a single stream, shot a glorious waterfall perhaps 800 feet high—the water scattered into smoke and drifted across the face of the rock long before it reached the bottom. From every point it looked absolutely impossible to reach the ice, flanked as it was with precipices. Above the ice rose black and jagged peaks—not my Silver Cone—that were terrible in their grim savagery, and the snow could only lie in patches, so steep were they. From where we stood, the gorge trended away to the right, and a huge abutment of the mountain hid a large part of the main glacier from view. Below us were the tree-tops, and bush so dense and tangled even to *cut* one's way through would be next to impossible work ; and hidden beneath the trees the river thundered, tearing its way over masses of rock and stone, unseen from above.

Still we pressed on—if only we could see round that buttress ; but every dry water-course was but a furrow in the mountain's face, and we but

scrambled out of one, to climb into another. The day grew hotter and hotter, and ahead of us stretched a horrible patch of burnt bush, where some forest fire had swept through dry manuka scrub, leaving the wiry stems and branches stiff and black: we emerged with hands and clothes blackened, and more parched than ever—was there no end to these gullies?

Time was getting on, and we decided to descend and see what lay at the foot of the ice-fall. Each time we could see to the opposite side of the ravine, it seemed to change its face: at one moment we were opposite that fairy waterfall, then in a little it had moved away; and when the great ice-field of the glacier came in view it seemed in a totally unexpected quarter. The descent into the bush was terrific—no other word for it. We swung by lianes and creepers, sliding and slipping; hanging by a branch to let ourselves down over moss-grown boulders, holding to ferns and anything we could lay hold of—often to find the branch or tree we held hollow with rottenness; and the whole would plunge downwards, and we be left clinging to the steep slope. Yet all the time the never-ceasing roar of the river seemed to be at a great distance, and it was long before we ceased looking through the tops of the trees below us, and began to look through their mossy stems to the opposite side.

Now and then we caught a glimpse of a tumbling cascade of foam; or an opening showed the precipice

beyond rearing itself up behind the trees. When at last we reached the river the fresh, cold air off its tumbling waters was like a cooling draught ; we bent down over it, we wet our heads and plunged our arms in it to the elbow, and cooled ourselves in the icy waters.

And what a heavenly spot we had got to out of the heat and glare above. Enormous boulders, twenty to thirty feet high, were strewn along the bottom, and round and over them rushed the foaming waters ; little dells of green grass and moss lay among the over-arching trees, and a wealth of ferns of many kinds drooped among the mossy stones that strewed the sides of the gorge. The sunshine poured down from a cloudless sky, and made play of dappled light and shade ; no wind stirred, save the current of air from off the water. We chose a flat rock jutting out into the torrent ; overhead, a tree with delicate light-green foliage and white, cherry-like blossoms sheltered our heads from the sun—and here we sat and rested, while we ate our lunch, feasting our eyes on one of the loveliest and grandest views I shall ever see.

For from below we gazed straight up to the jagged, green-blue edge of the glacier poised over the black cliffs streaked with waterfalls—all round us was the noise of other falls ; and while the bush acted as a dark green setting to the awesome crags and precipices, the spaces above the trees was intensely blue. Nor was beauty of detail wanting in a hundred rare and lovely shrubs and ferns, and

even flowers ; for there, just beyond the torrent was a mass of *Senecio Lyallii* just like beautiful creamy cinnerarias, while the ribbon-woods hung their cherry-like blossoms overhead. No sign was there anywhere of former occupation, or attempt to penetrate the gorge. I think we were the first, at any rate, to reach that spot, though we knew others had climbed along the top in the far-off days of prospecting and exploring.

We came to the conclusion there was no possibility of going further to-day ; we must bring up sleeping-bags and spend the night if we wanted to explore further, and so about two p.m. we turned back. Transome proposing we should follow the river, we began scrambling over the big boulders along the torrent ; but we soon found this quite impossible, and had to take to climbing through the bush—a trackless labyrinth, where no foot save our own had ever been.

My remembrance of the next two hours is of a breathless, well-nigh hopeless struggle against obstacles too tremendous for my powers. The innumerable gullies were much deeper and wider down at the bottom, and they nearly all contained water—although dry above ; sometimes we could hear it running underground, and one and all were choked with semi-tropical tangle.

Hooked “lawyer” clutched and tore us, lianes tied the trees together, and the living and the dead crowded and jostled each other up those precipitous slopes. It seemed a desperate game



THE ROB ROY GLACIER.



trying to get through, but to remain would have meant still worse, and I struggled bravely. Now and again came an easy bit, or a stretch of boulders where the waters had sought another channel, and whenever this happened we took to the river-bed. At last we came to an *impasse*. Some land-slip or storm had pitched the trees headlong down, and between them grew others, and over all the creepers romped. I felt like sitting down and saying: "Thus far and no farther"; but Transome was already climbing up along one of the trunks, and I was bound to follow: we *had* to get out of it somehow, and we *did*. He, pulling me up from between forked branches by main force, we gradually wormed our way through the tangle, till we came out exhausted on the burnt zone; and climbing upwards through tussock and fern, found ourselves back on the slate-faces. Then we slid and scrambled downwards through the tutu, till the belt of beech forest came in sight, and the patient horses turned with a whinny to welcome us. Never was mortal more thankful to have come safely out of a difficulty.

Transome went to bathe, and I led the horses out to a grassy place, where they could graze till he was ready. Then we rode back to Mrs. Macpherson's for supper, and if we had not done all we hoped to, we had seen what few but ourselves had looked upon. There was a sumptuous feast spread for us, and we lingered long, answering questions and planning further excursions; and

180 THROUGH SOUTH WESTLAND.

the light was failing when we said good-bye,
and rode down to the river.

One picture more of that day dwells in my mind :
the tiny cottage with the group at the door, cows
and calves straying about, Duncan Macpherson's
dogs standing sentinel on the rise before the house
—all framed by the lonely mountains, purple-
black in the gloaming, and the crescent moon
hanging in the opening of the gorge.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE ON THE MATUKITUKI.

Out from the hut at break of day,
And up the hills in the dawning grey ;
With the young wind flowing
From the blue east, growing
Red with the white sun's ray !

In vivid softness serene,
Pearly-purple and marble green ;
Clear in their mingling tinges,
Up away to the crest that fringes
Skies studded with cloud-crags sheen.

S. JEPHCOTT.

IT was Sunday. I looked out on a lovely still morning, the eastern light stole blue and silvery over the mountains to the river-bed ; the streams and waterfalls sang hymns of praise. Not a leaf stirred ; not a cloud was in the blue ; absolute peace was over all things. There are days when the mere fact of being alive in the sunshine fills one with complete happiness : we sat eating our breakfast out of doors at seven o'clock, feeling it was very good indeed to be alive.

We laughed at the vagaries of the marauding falcon, who had been summarily chased from their shingle-spit by the terns, and was sheltering himself under the over-hanging bank of our creek till the storm rolled by. They could not make out where he was, and, after wheeling and screaming overhead, went back to their river, and as soon as

the coast was clear, out he came and made off to the bush.

I had a special tidy-up that morning, and put fresh greenery on the mantel, and made our place as smart as possible, for we were expecting visitors. Then I got ready to give our guests lunch ; put the billy to boil, and had just finished when Transome watching the ford through glasses, announced a buggy and pair were at the crossing. We soon were welcoming our friends from Russell's Flat. They had brought the baby, and were very ready to share our lunch : tea, of course, was ready ; chicken-and-tongue shape, fresh scones, preserved pears, and other delicacies were set out on the table —and they did full justice to all.

They left us later to go on and see Mrs. Macpherson, laughing at the idea it was too bad a track for a buggy ! They told us if we would cross the river we should find quantities of fruit run wild, and this we accordingly did, riding some four miles down the river-bed, and then dismounting, roamed about where once had been a homestead. The house was gone, the fences had mostly fallen, the raspberries in the garden formed an impenetrable thicket, into which we broke our way with difficulty. There were both red and white raspberries—beautiful fruit. Gooseberries of all kinds abounded, and currants, too ; but the loveliest sight of all was a cherry tree, so covered with bright red fruit shining in the sun that it almost hid the leaves.

Here we spent the long hot afternoon, and when

we saw our friends' buggy slowly making its way down the wide river-bed, we hailed them and helped to gather as much fruit as they wanted ; and then they departed, leaving the valley empty once more, except for ourselves. In the peaceful evening light we rode back, carrying a supply of fruit, and ate our supper as the long, purple shadows of the mountains leaned across the river-bed, and mounted slowly over the opposite forest.

Next day we started to climb the mountain immediately behind the homestead. We had viewed it from a distance, and could see that it rose by a succession of gigantic stairs with very rugged outlines, to black rock and snow some 6,000 feet above us. Transome had already gone up some distance on one spur, where quantities of the magnificent *Ranunculus Lyallii* grew among the rocks. This gigantic white king-cup will not grow to any perfection on the plains, but just below snowline attains an immense size. The stems are much branched, and the flowers are often two and three inches across, the leaves frequently attaining fifteen inches, and carrying in their cup-shaped hollows quite a quantity of water.

We made our way by the waterfall and up through fern and undergrowth for the first 1,000 feet, and then through an easier bit, where the trees had been burnt and stood dead and stark. From here we got a better view of the ledges ; the cliffs between appearing to be several hundred feet and much broken. As we sat resting, a kea

circling overhead settled on a stump quite near us, and we could see his beautiful red-and-yellow under-wings. A beautiful bird : his glossy green-and-black plumage with turquoise pinion-feathers, make him the gayest among New Zealand birds in colouring. Alas, he is doomed. His newly-acquired habit of harrying the sheep puts a price on his head, and already he is confined to the less-frequented mountain solitudes. Yet the keas had never seen a sheep before the date of Captain Cook's arrival !

It was excessively hot, and every hundred feet seemed to increase our difficulties. We tried a spur, which seemed to lead to the top of the first ledge, but it was broken by a deep gully cutting it across ; so we took to a dry water-course and made some progress, but were stopped by a straight wall of rock. Transome was below, and I called to him I would try to the right. There was a nasty loose bit to be got over, running nearly sheer down to the lower part of the gully. I got across and peered round the buttress of rock. It fell away uncompromisingly, a drop of several hundred feet. No road that way. I started to get back : the stones kept flying down so, I had to wait till Transome could climb to the other side of the gully below me. When he gave the signal I tried to cross, but it was much harder to get back than it had been to get round the buttress, and before I knew I was shooting down in a shower of stones to the bottom —fortunately feet foremost. I grasped a tuft of



A KEA.

broom, then a flax plant, as I shot down—but they tore from my grasp, and I found myself at the bottom beside Transome, who was holding a hand-kerchief to his neck which was cut from a falling stone. However, we found that neither of us was really anything the worse. It was too late to start climbing by another route, so, hot and tired, we came down, and had a bathe, first in the icy river, then in warm, shallow pools in the sand. I may here add, we never tried this part of the mountain again.

Next morning it was still very hot, and we decided a day off would be pleasant. I had a regular clean-up, and washed our clothes in the creek; and after lunch we rode slowly up the flat to visit the old saw-mills. The mill itself was gone, but the house was standing, despoiled of everything except a stool, a battered basin, and two bunks. Large enclosures had been fenced in, and the grass, soft and velvety, looked almost like a lawn with groups of beautiful trees scattered about. What a site it would be for a summer outing! A river came out of a gorge between forest-clad cliffs, and behind them an amphitheatre of black rocks held a great glacier, hung between heaven and earth, with a fringe of waterfalls hanging like icicles to its broken face. We planned to explore this another day, and rode on to a placid ford on the main river—that is, placid for a stream which in most of its length races along like an express. It was a lovely spot, bush growing to the

water's edge, little beaches of silver grey sand, the river itself light-blue, and circling deep and silent round some immense blocks. Taking off the saddles we rode the horses in till they were swimming, and then leaving them to graze along the edge of the bush, we enjoyed a delightful bathe ourselves, much to the distress of a family of paradise ducks. The mother, in great agitation, packed off her five little flappers up stream, and got out near us on the shingle, trailing an apparently broken wing, and vainly tempting us to follow over the stones, while her husband flew downstream with loud cries of anger. As we did not give chase they both flew back, and alighted bang in the middle of the ducklings, who were diving and popping about quite unconcerned. It seemed little short of miraculous how anything could make headway up the river ; the old birds forged their way against the current, but the little ones progressed by successive dives, and presently they all vanished round a bend.

We lingered long in this lovely spot, and then, when the sunlight was cut off by the big snow peaks above the glaciers, we rode back to the Old Homestead by the disused bullock-track, watching, as we rode, the rabbits popping about in hundreds. I had left one ready in salt and water to cook for our evening meal, covering it carefully with mosquito netting. Alas ! when we got back the horrible flies had got to it, and were tumbling thick and black in the pot ! I took the whole, like Tom

Thumb's mother and the pudding, and threw it away ! The *pièce de résistance* being gone, we supped off green peas and potatoes, scones and red-currant jelly, and agreed, as we were leading the simple life, any meat was superfluous luxury.

Next day, for the first time, islands of silver-white cloud appeared in the blue, and sudden puffs of wind came from the north-west. We were up early, and by seven o'clock were riding over the flat, the bunnies popping about in all directions, and the river singing its loudest, as it does in the mornings ; by afternoon it will be full two feet deeper and will have ceased to sing. We crossed near the entrance to the "Gate of Death," and rode along a bridle-track beneath the Bluff which juts out at the meeting of the waters. Plenty of good grass grew all along the foot and up the lower slopes, and I now discovered what it was that gave it the yellow appearance I had seen from a distance. A common species of St. John's wort has taken possession of this side of the valley, and is fast destroying the pasture. Here was another forsaken home-stead ; the garden run wild—and from it the plant had come originally, from a few seeds planted by the settler's wife, which some one sent to her from home in a letter. She treasured it till one day a stranger, passing up the valley, said to her : " You will rue it if you keep that plant in your garden." Forthwith she threw it over the fence, and now it has spread in dense yellow patches for miles in this fertile valley. Two or three poplar

and elder bushes still marked the site of the garden, but most of the trees were dead, and the little stream that ran by the homestead has changed its course. The settlers are gone years ago, ruined by snows and floods, and only the St. John's wort flourishes after their years of toil.

We cantered steadily, a tearing hot wind chasing us and raising clouds of dust all the way down the river-bed. I was thankful to get to Mrs. Ross's clean, nice kitchen ; and after the parching heat and dust, her ginger-beer was very refreshing.

How strangely odd it felt to sit down to lunch at a table laid with a spotless cloth, and in the centre a bunch of sweet peas in a glass ; and the roast lamb and mint sauce, vegetables, and black-currant tart, seemed a feast indeed ! Haymaking was going on, and the men had all to hurry back after dinner, for these north-west storms end in violent rains in these parts. How quickly everything was washed and put away, the little girl laid down to sleep, and Mrs. Ross, in her pretty blue and white cotton dress, busy with the batch of bread as soon as we had finished tidying-up. I discovered some of this was meant for us, and a roast leg of lamb had been set aside too, and I do believe she imagined we were starving ! Then came tea, with delicious shortbread, and time for a chat ; and then, as the wind was dropping, we said good-bye and set out, absolutely laden with good things.

It had become much colder—the sky was over-

cast with driving clouds, and the winds made Tom very foolish, for he bolted twice, and I had to hand him over to Transome, and ride the Scorpion. The ford at the Niger Hut was high, and we were glad to cross safely and get into our quarters, very tired and sleepy.

That night the herd of cows roamed round us uneasily, and an old, mangy red beast knocked down all my pots and pans outside, and found my precious soap, which she chewed. At last I heard Transome dragging his things inside, routed by her persistent attempts to take his rug ; then peace fell, and I knew no more till morning. When I went out then, I found everything tumbled about, and after searching for my precious soap, picked up a dirty, unrecognizable lump, which the mangy cow had found too strong for her. This I thankfully recovered and washed in the creek.

CHAPTER IX.

STORM.

Behind the rugged mountains, peaked and torn,
One planet glitters in the icy cold,
Poised like a hawk above the frozen peaks ;
And now again the wild nor'wester speaks,
And bends the cypress, shuddering, to his fold
While every timber, every casement creaks.

ANNE GLENNY WILSON.

MORNING broke cold and cloudy for the first time. The upper end of our valley was blocked with mist, and the scene was very like a Scotch or Irish one on a wet day. I found I could not light the fire—it all blew into the middle of the room, and threatened us with a conflagration. I just managed some eggs and tea, and we breakfasted out of doors devoured by sand-flies ; and, as my house became covered with dust and ashes, and filled with smoke—we agreed, if bad weather set in, we should have to flee in the Berline. It was just as well we had brought a supply of food back with us, as lighting a fire was out of the question.

The morning passed cleaning-up, reading, and writing, and then we set off to see Mr. Macpherson, who had returned to the Lone Shieling. We knew this by finding a bottle of milk set on our table by way of a visiting card when we came in last night. By noon it had settled into a drizzle, and we went along the base of the mountains by

a narrow track that keeps rather high and avoids the river-bed, but involving a good deal of scrambling and several boggy places to get over—and the four miles took us a long time. We found the family at home. Maepherson, a true Highlander, tall and big, entered with zest into all our plans, and said we would try for the Ice-caves to-morrow, if the weather cleared. He was a great talker once he started, and knew a great deal about the mountains, though he had never been to the Ice-caves. He holds 54,000 acres of barren mountain, the only good land being the strips along the rivers and in the valleys. As we sat talking, the rain came down in torrents, and mist hid the mountains, and one could imagine how lonely and desolate is this little settlement from autumn to spring. Sitting round the tea-table we heard more stories of the river.

This spring Mrs. Macpherson took the children to Pembroke in the trap—leaving her little boy with Macpherson. When they left Russell's Flat on the return journey, rain came on, they were wet through, and her husband was not at the ford. True, there was the Niger Hut, but they wanted to get home, and she drove the horse into the river ; but in a little time she found he was being carried away and beginning to swim. The children cried with fear, and in terror of the river she got the horse turned, and wet and cold they got out. Fortunately the rain ceased, and unharnessing the horse, they started to walk by the bridle-track.

Here she met her husband with a second horse. He forded first, carrying two children ; then she and the baby were placed on the saddle, but she was too terrified to hold the reins, and clutched her baby while he led the horse through—she is always terrified of the cruel river.

Tea over, we set out homewards, with old sacks pinned round our shoulders, slopping and slipping through water and wet grass. There was no sign of the horses when we got back, but we hoped they had gone up into the bush for shelter. The wood was wet, everything dripping, and the light failing, but we managed to kindle a fire and make some soup ; and then sat listening to the rumble of the avalanches and the increasing roar of the waterfalls. It was a wild night of storm and rain. We awoke, sometimes to wonder, would the old cottage stand the terrific blasts that swept down on it from the mountains ?

When we got up it was late ; the sun was shining, the rain had ceased ; but it was too windy to think of a fire in our wide chimney, so I retired to the ruined cowshed below the rise, and managed to coax up a blaze, boil some eggs, and then carried our breakfast indoors. Showers chased each other over the mountain, which were veiled half way in mist—all their sides were seamed with waterfalls, leaping and roaring, and the river hurried by in a grey flood. We had just two compensations—the cows had gone away, and the flies too. Later it cleared somewhat ; lights and shadows

swept over the rocky mountain sides ; now a peak gleamed in sunshine ; then again a jagged edge stood black against a grey sky. No excursions were possible in this weather.

That night it was too windy to light a fire, and it had become cold ; we sat indoors by the feeble light of two candles, our shoulders wrapped in rugs. Our bread supply was nearly exhausted, and next day was Sunday, and we could not get a fresh one.

All night it blew fitfully. I had promised salmon for breakfast, but we had to eat it cold, and we had only a very hard end of a loaf and one scone left. Again, the next afternoon, the sky seemed to come down and fill the gorge, and we returned from a short expedition very wet and much depressed. So miserable were we, I felt we *must* have a fire, and, to my joy, I found the wind had shifted, and the chimney was drawing up, not down. We had dinner, using our last five potatoes, and there was no bread.

I had just washed up when two dogs came bounding up to me, and behind them Mr. Macpherson was seen riding over the paddock. He was very welcome, especially so as he brought us some milk and a jar of cream, and had come to say the weather would be all right by to-morrow, and he would take us to the Ice-caves. As I was setting to work getting some soup ready for him, the wind played me a scurvy trick, for a sudden gust sent sparks and ashes all over my clean floor ; and the

men had to prop an old door across the hearth to keep a remnant of the fire in !

It is certainly a very inconvenient house in this respect, and in windy weather always full of wood-ashes and dust ; nevertheless our visitor enjoyed his supper, and he and Transome smoked a pipe together, and then he rode away as dusk was falling.

A happy change in the night ushered in a bright sunny morning : the air crisp as with frost, and everything shining after the rain. We were early astir, the fire burned clear, and I fried some bacon ; the horses were caught, and we started across the flat and rode through the “ Gate of Death,” in high hopes of a successful day. The “ *sturm und drang* ” of the last few days had but made us all the keener, and we were glad once more to see the cloudless sunshine and blue sky over the valley.

CHAPTER X.

THE SILVER CONE

“ Spirit of ice and snow,
Goddess, whose hands are laid
Upon the brows of men who needs must go
To seek thy loneliness, immortal maid,
Within thy fastness of thy frozen place ;
Dost thou their toil behold ?
Thine heart is dull with cold,
Cold is thy shrine, and colder thine embrace.”

As we rode to the door Mrs. Macpherson was just carrying two pails of glorious new milk from the cowshed, and Mr. Macpherson was saddling his mare ; the children all came running to see the start, and the Lone Shieling looked very homely, and not at all lonely, under the flood of sunshine—for, indeed, the sun seemed to be trying to make amends for the days of storm. I had a cupful of new milk out of the pails. Duncan tied on the lunch bag, and we were off. Tom had lost a hind shoe, and the rough track was very trying ; but, led by Mr. Macpherson, we made good progress, and occasionally found some grassy bits where we could canter. When opposite the Rob Roy gorge, we got a view of the glacier : the peaks above it had a fresh dusting of snow, and lay dazzling white under the glorious New Zealand blue. As we journeyed on, the mountains to right and left were tilted at the most extraordinary

angles, the strata often exposed in ribs from top to bottom. Enormous slabs of slate lay about, and the colouring was a mixture of slatey-blue and red. We were obliged to ford several times—riding now this side now that of the river, and as we got higher we were surprised at the rich “feed” in the river-bed. We saw some of Mr. Macpherson’s cows up here—practically wild, the calves running with the mothers ; and a young colt who will surely be a sure-footed beast, for it careered wildly over rocks and boulders where most horses would have broken a leg. From the mountains on both sides came many waterfalls, leaping from the very tops. Just ahead Mount Ansted showed a snowy shoulder, and behind the ranges on our left, but unseen, lay Lake Wakatipu and Mount Earnslaw. The valley up which we were travelling bore away to the right, and, as we went on, the mountains towered up in fantastic shapes and beetling precipices, and at their foot the river ran, a pale blue stream. The valley grew wilder the higher we got, filled with ancient morainic terraces, through which many streams and the river have cut their way. This must be very rich land, for the terraces were covered with beautiful grass slopes, and groups of fine trees scattered about gave a strangely park-like effect. Sometimes a long opening appeared between the trees, like some grass-grown carriage-drive that ought to lead to an ancient house, but of track or sign of man there was none. Here we left the horses.



IN THE WEST BRANCH OF THE MATKIKKI.

Grander and grander views opened out as we went on. The cliffs on our left were crowned with glaciers, which curving over them, broke and sent long tongues down into gullies in the mountain sides. These again became waterfalls, leaping from such heights they were changed to finest spray. At the foot of some of these falls were the Ice-caves we had come to seek, and somewhere ahead of us was the "Silver Cone."

Mr. Macpherson was now in full command—whittling a stick with feverish energy, another held in readiness under his arm, thick as his wrist, to be whittled away in no time! It seemed to give him an inspiration, and he had an unerring instinct where to go, for as far as knowledge went, we were now far past his farthest point, and he had to *find* the way. So, led by our Highlander, we plunged into the bush, almost as bad to get through as the Rob Roy, only the slopes were less precipitous, and the floor covered with moss a foot deep. Tree trunks, stones—everything alike were embedded in five or six different and equally lovely kinds. Little streams trickling through it, made fairy waterfalls where the sun caught the moisture, and covered the delicate sprays and fronds with diamonds. And in the moss grew orchids, curious rather than beautiful perhaps, but the spotted leaves of one variety, dotted with purple, were pretty. The tall *Gastrodia Cunninghamii* grew here, a dirty-green flower, spotted with white, whose starchy roots are said to have been used by the Maoris for

food. I think the ferns were more varied than in the Rob Roy gorge, but nothing like the lavish variety of the South Westland forest. Overhead the trees kept off the sun, and all the gullies contained tumbling torrents from the glaciers hanging to the mountains on the left. Above one of these gullies Macpherson paused, whittling hard ; the Ice-caves must lie farther along those cliffs to the left, and there was a swirling torrent between us and any possible track ; he emitted some curious Gaelic ejaculations, and then plunged downward—and we followed, swinging ourselves by creepers and ferns, till we caught him up where he stood on a big boulder out in the water. Between them they helped me on to it too, and beyond where the big Highlander stood lay a churning rapid with one big stone large enough in the middle to hold us both—but the question was, how was I to get there ? Gathering himself for the spring, he lit safely on the stone, and turning, stretched out his arms, bidding me jump. I was considerably above him, which made it easier, but I venture to say I never had, and never again shall have, such a leap to make. However, when the question is of being left behind or taking the risk, one never hesitates long—and I jumped. I felt his big arms close round me, and we pirouetted wildly for one moment, trying to keep our balance, and then—over we went into the tumbling water ! He never let go, and landed me unharmed on the other side, none the worse beyond wet feet. And soon

THE FIRST VIEW OF THE SILVER CONE. IT LIES IN THE CLOUDS TO THE RIGHT. 198



after this we left the forest behind, and came out on the river.

And now we began to see the full beauty and the solemn grandeur of the place. To right and left the mountains converged till the whole valley was blocked by a mighty mass, well-nigh perpendicular, whose summits were snow-covered to within a few hundred feet of their tops, where the black rocks ran up in pyramids too steep for snow. Along this wall the eye travelled eastwards over pure snow-fields to a magnificent ice-fall, looking from here as if it must actually be moving, its colour exquisite in its tones of green below the snow-white waves. And then, just as last year it was described to me on the West Coast, rose clear and pure the “great Silver Cone against the blue.” One unbroken wave of snow seemed to run up one side to the very top, which, looked at with the naked eye, appeared almost a point, but the field-glasses revealed a double crown. The face towards us was only lightly powdered with snow: it was almost sheer. From where it rose, the mountains presented a savagely broken view of riven rock and snow-field, culminating in a mighty curved wave of glacier, which overhung a sheer precipice—a purple, misty gulf, so deep and dark we could only guess its probable depth at a thousand feet or more. Farther up it looked like a great cleft in the mountain wall; and another glacier blocked the head of it—an awesome chasm.

All I had been told was true, and more; and as

we gazed in silence we saw the whole lip of the curved wave break and plunge downwards, the roar reaching our waiting ears like artillery. It is always so strange when you *see* the actual avalanche shoot down, to *hear* it only when it has practically been turned to powder.

I was so fascinated by this sight that Mr. Macpherson, growing impatient, went on ahead to search for the Ice-caves. We followed him up a brawling torrent, over terraces of stones and tumbled fragments of the hills, till we came to a cleft where the rocks rose in two huge slabs, and wedged between them in a ravine was a mass of ice. From a magnificent archway in its face, large enough for three coaches to drive in abreast, the torrent gushed forth. The archway must have been quite forty feet high, its roof within curiously wrought as though kneaded by gigantic knuckles, and hung all over with big drops that fell incessantly—but in winter time these must be icicles. Looking into its vasty depths, one saw it bend round in a curve where the dim light gave way to almost utter blackness. We ventured in, stepping from stone to stone, balancing with fingers touching those strange ice-walls. On down this weird tunnel, till a light ahead and a deafening roar told us we were within sight of where the waterfall pours into a great black hole it has bored right through the ice. We could go no farther—water filled all the space from wall to wall, and there were no stepping-stones to be seen in the dim light. Deadly

cold was gripping us ; nor was it safe to remain after the great heat outside, and so we turned to go. As we emerged round the bend the blaze of sunshine without dazzled our eyes for a moment, and then we saw a sight few have seen. There, framed by the arch of ice, rose the Silver Cone—all that pure curve of snow, with its every rock, every purple shadow, sharp and distinct against a blue so intense, it seemed dark against the snow. From the cave we looked straight into the chasm below the peak, but could see neither to the bottom nor to the end of that misty gulf—only up to the glacier curling over the black precipice.

I needs must see *how* the water entered the cave. We climbed up on to the top of it, and proceeded over a slippery surface, rather sloppy in the hot sunshine, till we stood below the waterfall which shoots in unbroken volume into a round, black hole. A cloud like steam rises out of it, and hangs around the opening. Looking upwards you see the fall comes down in a succession of three grand leaps, having their beginnings in a glacier poised some thousands of feet above. I don't know whether it is more weirdly strange to stand up there at the edge of the uncanny pot-hole, or in the dimness of the cave to hear the water thundering down without.

We clambered round a buttress of cliff beyond the Ice-cave, and came to the second wonder. I have no doubt it had once been very similar to the first, because a waterfall at the end of a

short gully came down in a very similar manner, but the middle portion was gone, and what remained was a perfect ice-arch. Through this, one saw a second arch with the river foaming under. They were magnificent, and here, too, we had to climb on top, and Macpherson and I were photographed as we stood in the centre of the bridge. At this point he left us : we wanted, if possible, to get some good photographs, and he said he was going to find an easier way back—it may have been shorter, but easier it was not, and involved some terrific gymnastics in the way of scrambling.

I sat down on a boulder in front of the cave, glad to be alone, and free to look in silence—filled with that exultation that comes to the heart of the lover of mountains ; and filled, too, with the strange yearning to be one with it all—to understand—to let the solemn majesty of the mountains sink into one's being. Awe they inspire ; and fear too !

At last, from far down near the bush, came a haloo, and we knew Macpherson was getting impatient at our long tarrying, and we started homewards. We had to cross the ice-torrent first, and here, after so many experiences, I nearly disgraced myself by slipping back off a rock ; but Transome rescued me, and pulled me safely ashore.

Mr. Macpherson must have whittled away many sticks while waiting, and was confident his new

route would bring us to the horses in half the time. Plunging down gullies, scrambling up slippery slopes through ferns and bush, we did at last come out, very hot and tired, on the grassy terraces, and threw ourselves down beside the lunch-bag. It was past four o'clock, and we had not eaten since the start ; and I think he enjoyed his meal as much as we did. Then the horses were saddled, and in the yellow afternoon sunlight we rode down the west Matukituki valley, well pleased.

Mrs. Macpherson had made a famous red-currant tart as a crown to her other hospitable efforts, and we sat chatting over our supper till the moon rose above the valley walls. The last tints of sunset vanished from the mountains, and a great peace fell upon all things. As we rode, for the last time, towards the "Gate of Death," I turned and said good-bye to the Lone Shieling. It was all so still : the children had gone indoors to bed, and the soft, dark curtain of the night was falling across the mountains ; we had come into the circle of the lonely home for a space, and now we vanished as suddenly as we had come ; but I think we will never in after years forget.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOST TRAIL.

An ocean of trees, by the west wind stirred,
Rolled, ever rolled, to the great cliff's base :
And its sound like the noise of waves was heard
'Mid the rocks and the caves of that lonely place.

M. H. FOOTT.

OUR time was fast coming to an end. There was but one more expedition before us : to find Mr. Macpherson's trail, made nine years ago, up the eastern Matukituki—for he had once great ideas and believed these lonely valleys would one day vie with the Otira in drawing strangers hither. So he cut a trail and built a hut, but no one came, and the all-covering bush very soon took charge of his clearings, and sowed them plentifully with strong young saplings ; and in process of time the hut became a ruin.

The air was sharp with frost ; our smoke curled up blue against the dark of the beeches as I prepared breakfast early, and we sat in the sun to warm ourselves as we ate it. We had brought home a tin packed with eggs the night before, and all but two got broken, so I put the whole of them into the frying-pan ; and if it were not an omelette, it was an exceedingly good breakfast. And then we saw our Highlander coming across the flat, leading a spare horse. This was for me ;

we had decided Tom must stay at home, or his shoeless hoof would not stand the long drive to Pembroke next day. She was just like a table, this horse of Macpherson's, with a thin neck stuck on at one end, and a very large and heavy head ; her paces consisted of a jog-trot and a walk, and she had no regard for bit, bridle, or rider. Macpherson himself was on the oddest beast I have ever seen : his pigeon-toes turned in till the knee-joints bent outwards ; he appeared to have four hind legs, so that, like Mephibosheth, he was lame on both his feet. But it was wonderful what that animal went over ; indeed, he appeared to be able to climb anything, though his temper was testy, and he occasionally refused absolutely to proceed. Then would begin a battle between them, his rider emitting strange sounds of wrath with awful Gaelic threatenings, and they would twist and turn on the edge of some declivity where his poor, malformed legs were like to be broken ; till, with a sudden plunge, a slide, and Macpherson's heels playing a tune on his ribs, they arrived safely at the bottom.

The larks were singing as we rode over the dewy flat and reached the first ford—the mountains were clear of mist and very pure and sharp, and the bunnies were having high-jinks. On looking back we saw old Tom hurrying after us, greatly alarmed at being left behind, and there was nothing for it but to let him come. Plunging into the flood with a splash he raced after us, and indeed, as it

happened, we should not have got back that night without him. Our guide led us along the river, first by glades and open bush where the magnificent southern beeches* towered up seventy and eighty feet.

There are several varieties of this noble tree, which attains in these southern forests to huge dimensions ; Menzie's beech and Solander's beech may reach even a hundred feet. No more beautiful forest can be imagined than this beech-forest, with the long vistas down stately isles between their silvery boles, the branches spreading high overhead, covered with the small, dark green leaves no bigger than boxwood, and exceedingly feathery and graceful in shape. The settlers call them all "birch," and merely distinguish them as "white," "black," or "red," according to the wood.

At first the going was good enough, and there was but little undergrowth, and the old scars on the trunks were plain ; but this did not last, and we came to boggy places and gullies, which severely tried Mephibosheth's legs ; then a tangle of slender young trees and huge rotting trunks, with here and there a fine red beech among the lesser growths. The horses broke their way through easily enough, but with no regard for their riders, and we sat ready to slip off first one side and then the other, and our feet were constantly in danger of being crushed. Thus we progressed through several

* *Nothofagus*.

little gullies, and then found the track quite suddenly ; Mr. Macpherson had tried for it in many directions, and kept up a constant running fire of exclamations as to its total disappearance. From this onwards the marks on the trees were clearly visible, and all went well till we essayed a narrow ledge above the river, and here we found an *impasse*, where a fallen tree completely blocked it. In a moment he turned the cavalcade and went skipping down a water-course, with Mephibosheth stumbling and slipping behind him, into the river-bed, in among a lot of boulders, and across a bare ledge of rock by a deep pool. My unwieldy animal refused to budge, and chewed stolidly at some toe-toe grass, and it was a long time ere I could wake her up ; then I saw Tom hurry, scrambling after the Scorpion, and missing the place where the others had sidled along the rocky ledge above the deep water, he went swimming across the pool, At last we all arrived at a point where two rivers met, both tumultuous torrents, and in the V between them stood the hut. It was roughly built of river stones, and looked for all the world like another Highland shieling. Alas, it failed to tempt the tourist as its builder hoped, and it was now roofless and a ruin, and Duncan shook his head ruefully over it.

The river beside it comes through a narrow gorge, the nearer view being blocked with trees ; and above them another view of Mount Aspiring presented itself, a terrific mass of precipices and glaciers.

No Silver Cone against the blue here ; black and grey walls of sheer rock like a crater rim held two glaciers, which ended in falls over perpendicular rocks—an unclimbable mountain as seen from here.

The track beyond this is quite lost for either man or beast—so we made a fire and had lunch, and leaving the men to smoke, I climbed up beside a waterfall to a bower of moss and ferns, where the little green and grey wrens, no bigger than mice, were daintily hopping about among the branches.

As I came back slowly to the little flat, no horses were in sight. There sat Transome, solitary on a stone, smoking.

“They are all gone away,” he remarked. “We’ll have to wait till they are caught.” Then he proceeded to explain that the Scorpion and Mephibosheth had made off, the latter trailing a twenty-foot rope, and they were only in time to catch old Tom at the fording-place and bring him back to be saddled. Duncan rode after the truants, but they had had a good start, with faces towards home. We sat watching for some time, devoured by sand-flies and speculating as to how we should pass the night : there were still some crusts and a little cocoa and a bar of chocolate in the knapsack, but not even an oilskin to cover us. The valley was all in shadow now, and a night up here did not seem an attractive programme. Then from below the junction of the river I saw the mare I had ridden come slowly out of the bush, and cross the shingle-spit with Mephibosheth following ; then came Duncan

on Tom, with the Scorpion, looking full of mischief, behind.

Three of them crossed the river, but Mephibosheth elected to remain in mid-stream, and turning to escape, got his twenty-foot rope round a stone, and became anchored. Duncan's temper had evidently been greatly tried : he made a dash into the water and began dragging the beast backwards with the rope between its legs ; but it was too strong for him, and he had to let go, and off went Mephibosheth as fast as his crooked legs could carry him. A second pursuit on Tom followed, and he was secured this time. After all these excursions and alarms, we deemed it time to go home, feeling really grateful to Tom for his persistency in following us that day.

Arrived at the Old Homestead, I made tea for our Highlander, and regaled him on herrings and apricots ; and then into an old sack we put various tins, plates, and oddments to take home, and bade him good-night, quite sorry to part, he promising to see us over the ford in the morning.

Our last night was celebrated by a great feast, after which Transome composed the following and nailed it up over the mantelpiece :

NOTICE.

To all those who hereafter inhabit this dwelling,
commonly called "The Cave of Aeolus" :

Don't break up the house or furniture for fire-wood.

210 THROUGH SOUTH WESTLAND.

Don't forget to sweep and leave clean for the next-comer.

Don't forget the chimney draws down instead of up.

Don't lose your temper when it smokes.

Don't lose your temper with the sand-flies ; they
know no better. (Signed) T. & M.



THE BERLINE STARTS HOMEWARDS.

CHAPTER XII.

FAREWELL.

O quiet valley, opening to the East,
How far from this thy peacefulness am I !
Ah me, how far ! and far this stream of life
From thy clear creek fast falling to the sea !
Yet let me not lament that these things are
In that loved country I shall see no more :
All that has been is mine inviolate,
Lock'd in the secret book of memory.

D. WILCOX.

FOR the last time next morning I watched the blue and silver of my valley turn to gold and shining gems ; for the last time listened to the merry singing of the river over its shingly shallows ; for the last time heard the flutey bell-birds calling. There was a weight on my heart as I packed the sailor's-bag, and when we sat down to our early breakfast we did not even revile the mangy cow who had paid her last visit in the night, and devoured the potatoes destined for our breakfast.

And then we tidied-up, swept our ungarnished chambers, and were getting the Berline dragged forward when Duncan came riding over the flat. Our now reduced stock was soon on board ; the borrowed kerosene tin, tied on behind, clanged sympathetically to every groan of the Berline, as it lumbered its way across the uneven ground. We drove over the wide river-bed till we came

to the ford, but it no longer had any terrors for us. We were nearly across when the wheels seemed to drive heavily, and a curious crackling from behind arrested us. “It’s the kerosene tin !” I exclaimed. It was jammed between the wheel and the side of the buggy, and the handle had come off. I grabbed at it desperately, but it got free and floated swiftly out of reach. Duncan, seeing it thus, kicked his horse in the ribs and rode after it, and we watched a wild chase down stream, sometimes he just had his hand on it, and the horse swerved or the river bore it away, and off they went again. At last we saw him jump into the water, and he returned triumphant and soon patched up another handle, and on we went once more.

We had just got to the Niger Hut, with its memories of bottomless beds and hungry cows, when a grinding crash came and the wheel jammed. The kerosene tin again !—but Duncan to the rescue ; and this time, when with tugs and jerks and objurgations he freed it, we tied it in a better place, and forward good Berline once more.

And now we took farewell of Mr. Macpherson. He had been kindness itself, and we had learned to like and respect the Highland family up in their lonely home. We watched him ride away till he and his dogs were but moving dots on the wide stretch of grey stones ; then we trotted gaily over the grassy track, and pulled up at Mrs. Ross’s : as usual a feast was ready—roast lamb, junket, and



"WE WATCHED HIM RIDE AWAY TILL HE AND HIS DOGS WERE
BUT MOVING DOTS ON THE WIDE STRETCH OF
GREY STONES."

gooseberries, and there was much laughing over our experiences.

The day grew cloudy, no wind stirred, and a sultry heat was in the air as we drove away from the hospitable house.

We next called on an ancient Dane of seventy-three, whom we had met on our way going up, and who had told us his parents were both living : "the old Dad" ninety-seven, and the old Mother one hundred and seven. A cheery old soul who acted cook at a station, and described himself as "a mere lad." The lake lay perfectly still before us, a mirror of silver framed by blue hills, and as we drove round the curving bays on a road inches deep in dust, these bare hills looked parched to us after our forest-greenness in the Matukituki valley. The little houses in their barbed-wire enclosures looked tired and stuffy, and the hotel gardens had lost their freshness, and Pembroke seemed altogether too towny for our liking.

Great was the interest excited by our arrival, and all dinner-time we had to answer a fire of questions from less-adventurous tourists, who had got no further than the lake. We were glad to escape, and wander out in the moonlight along its shores. I thought with regret how the white moonbeams were lying across our lonely valley, left now to the rabbits and the cows. . . . The black falcon will perch unmolested on the tree before the door ; the ducks won't need to go through their pantomime for our benefit ; no one

will stand looking at the hurrying river, and in the blue and silver morning listen to its singing.

Beautiful, untrodden ways and silent mountains, we come no more ; like Okuru and its placid lagoon, you are laid by for ever in the inner room of memories . . . for us it is enough to have seen “the great Silver Cone against the blue” . . . we come no more.



FINIS.

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APPENDIX.

THE CLIMBING OF THE SILVER CONE, ASPIRING RANGE.

THE second season after I was there, the central peak, by many believed to be unclimbable, was conquered by Captain Head, R.A., with New Zealand guides. The year before it had been attempted by an experienced climber, Dr. Teichelmann of Hokitika, who brought back a unique series of photographs. His attempt was made from the west, where so many days were lost in cutting a track through heavy bush country, that for lack of time the central peak had to be abandoned. Much of the range was, however, explored by him in company with Alex. Graham of the Waiho gorge. This young guide, with Mr. J. Clarke of the New Zealand Geological Survey, discovered the route by which Captain Head made the ascent of the highest peak, 9,975 feet.

I append some extracts from a letter I received from him, giving a graphic account of the climb :

“ Our first attempt was made up the east branch, but in this we were destined to disappointment, for after establishing a base-camp, in bad weather, and then waiting for several days for it to clear, we found that it would be impossible from that position. The Pope’s Nose (which is really a

shoulder of Aspiring) stood boldly up from the head of the valley, presenting almost sheer rock faces, and so plastered with icicles that any attempt from this position was quite out of the question so early in the season. So we were forced to alter our plan of attack. Looking from where we were now located, we concluded that the south face of Aspiring was drained by the western branch of the Matukituki ; and as our only hope now lay in that direction, we decided to waste no time about starting for the western branch, and accordingly struck camp next morning, and with the help of Macpherson and his horse we took all we required with us. The first night we pitched camp opposite the Rob Roy glacier, where we were detained for two days by bad weather. On the weather again clearing we went on to the edge of the bush above the cascade, where we established our base-camp.

“ On the following day we started with a flying-camp for the head of the river, with six days’ provisions. After passing the Ice-caves we again got into bush and much rougher country, and after a weary day’s march with heavy swags, we found ourselves in the open river-bed and old moraine heaps, which were literally snow-white with mountain lilies and celmisia. That night we took our well-earned rest in our little alpine tent surrounded with beautiful mountain flowers, within sight of the head of the western branch, but to our dismay instead of it rising from the

southern face of our mountain, it ended abruptly in a snow-saddle. We now knew, however, that what lay between us and Aspiring must be the head snow-fields of the Bonar glacier, from which rises the Waipara, a tributary of the Arawata river, which empties into Jackson's Bay (West Coast). On rising early next morning we decided to make the col at the head of the river, and were rewarded by a beautiful view of the Waipara valley, and also of the main ice-fall of the Bonar glacier ; but we found it impossible to get to our peak from this saddle. Our one hope now lay in returning some distance down the river and trying another saddle, which we hoped would give us access to the "*névé*" of the Bonar, over which we trusted to pick a route that would bring us to Aspiring.

"Accordingly, next morning we started on our final attempt, taking all camping gear with us. We climbed slowly up a good leading spur for some hours until reaching a height of between five or six thousand feet, where we decided on a spot suitable for a bivouac. The day was beautifully fine, with scarcely a cloud in the sky. After having made all preparations for camp, Clarke and I went on in the afternoon to the high saddle we were making for, and on which all our hopes lay in gaining access to the peak. We were all struck with the wonderful and beautiful views that surrounded us on all sides ; and the amount of Alpine country, and the fineness of most of the peaks was much

beyond what we expected, and we often paused on our upward way to admire to the full the glory of that afternoon. Looking down the valley we could plainly see Mount Earnslaw and the Dart valley over a low saddle in the dividing range.

“ As Clarke and I neared the top of the saddle, you can imagine we were quite excited and anxious to see whether disappointment or a hope of success was in store for us. So you can imagine our joy to find, when we at length reached the col, that we practically stood on the border of an immense snowfield some two-and-a-half to three miles across, and which afforded us a clear route to the foot of Aspiring, standing up grandly in front of us.

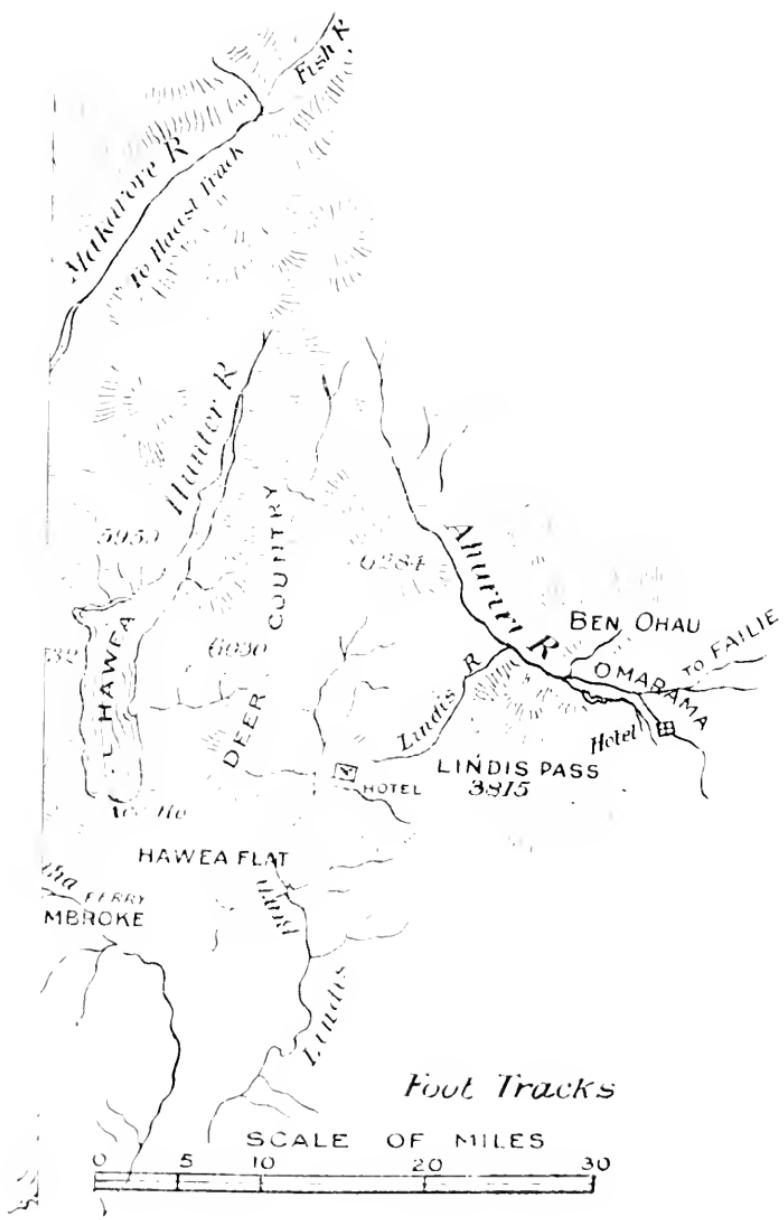
“ After picking a route for the final climb of the peak we returned to camp, and reported to Captain Head that everything seemed favourable for success.

“ The following morning we rose at 12.30, starting an hour later by lantern-light, and by following our steps of the previous day reached the saddle just as day was breaking. Our hopes, however, did not rise with the day, as a sudden change of weather threatened, and thick mist started to drive up from the north, and we were soon enveloped in a dense and cold fog. However, to our joy, as the sun rose, it again cleared, and we were able to proceed ; and we started off across the great snow plateau at a brisk walk, and after an hour-and-a-half we stood at the foot of the real climb. We

had been roped together since leaving camp, so, after a short halt, we started on more serious work. Our route lay up very steep snow-slopes for about 3,000 feet, which required step-cutting all the way—the final 600 feet to the summit was along a sharp snow *arête*. All rocks were so plastered with icicles that it was impossible to tackle them, so that it was just a matter of step-cutting, and we at last stood on the highest point of Aspiring. The wind, however, had again risen, and clouds started to drive up thickly again from the north—so the view, which would undoubtedly have been a magnificent one, was hidden from our eyes ; Mount Cook could just be discerned away in the dim distance, jutting through the cloud-bank. With the weather threatening, we could not afford to linger more than a few minutes on the top. The descent was made in good time, retracing our steps made in the ascent. Misty clouds enveloped us occasionally during the decent and also crossing the snow-field. . . . I am afraid you will get weary of this rather rambling account, but still trust you may find something of interest in it. . . .

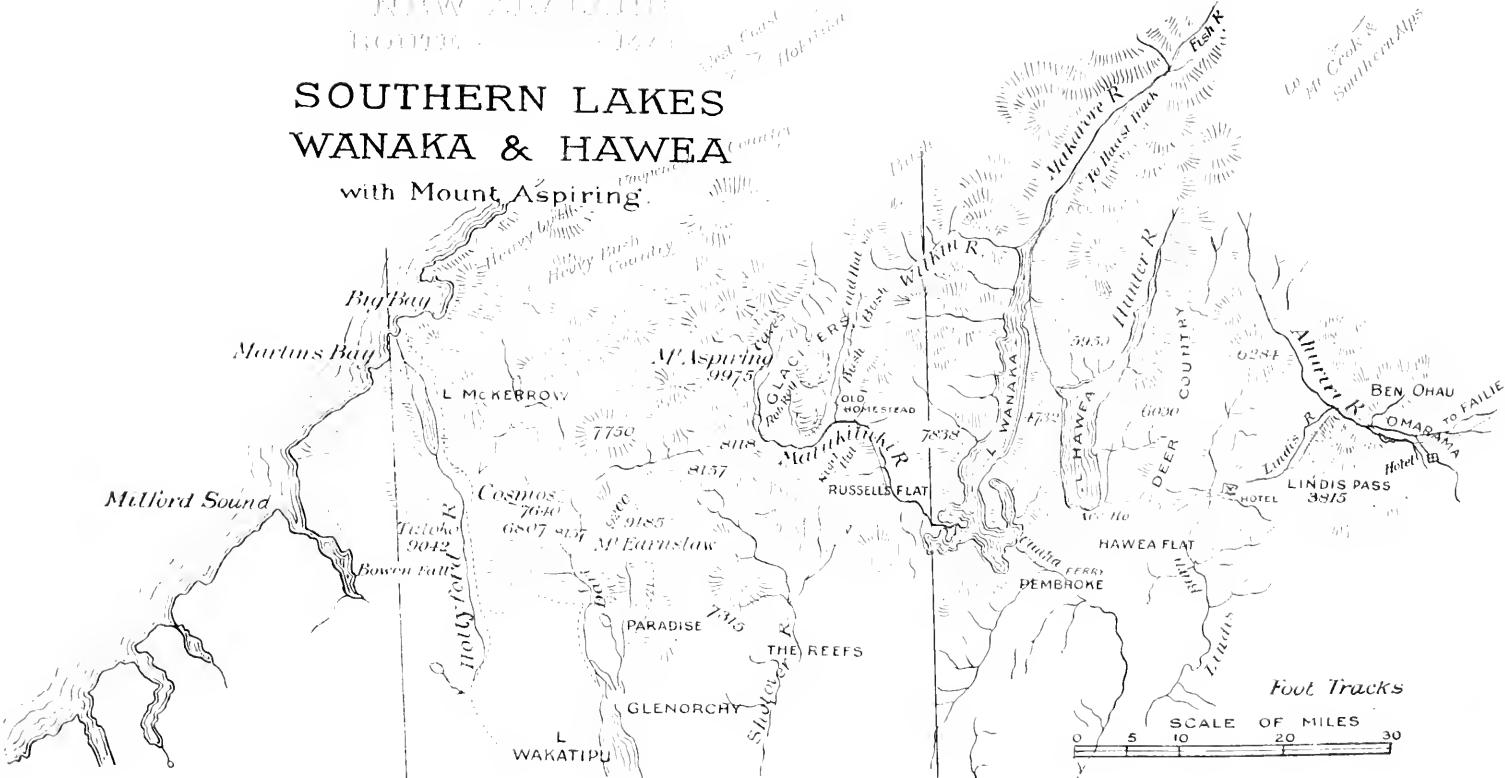
“ Sincerely yours,

“ ALEX. GRAHAM.”



SOUTHERN LAKES WANAKA & HAWEA

with Mount Aspiring.



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